Mr. BARNES OF NEW YORK.

BY

ARCHIBALD CLAVERING GUNTER.

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MR. BARNES OF NEW YORK.

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A Novel.

BY

ARCHIBALD CLAVERING GUNTER,

Author of the Plays "Prince Karl," "The Deacon's Daughter," "Fresh, the American," "Two Nights in Rome," etc., etc.

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MR. BARNES OF NEW YORK.

BOOK I.

THE DUEL AT AJACCIO.

CHAPTER I.

WAITING.

"YES, I rather imagine this is the exact spot," says Mr. Burton H. Barnes, of New York, to the venerable host of the very old and very dilapidated little inn that stands on the shores of the Gulf of Ajaccio, near where the Bastia road turns inland, and, following up the Gravona torrent, first through the orange and citron groves of the fertile Campoloro and then over hills covered with the vine and olive, is lost in the chestnut woods that hide the lower slopes of the great Monte del Oro.

Nothing can be in more vivid and striking contrast than the man and his surroundings; the light civilization of an exponent of New York fashion of the year 1882 stands face to face with the barbaric romance of the old Corsican scene and the mediæval picturesqueness of the native costume of the old innkeeper, who curiously asks, in his soft, southern *patois*, ignoring the French in which Mr. Barnes has addressed him, "The spot for what, signor?"

"The spot where there is going to be a first-class duel this morning, as soon as there is light enough to kill."

"To kill what?"

"Each other! Don't you know what a duel is?" Here Mr. Barnes gives a short dissertation on the code of honour, illustrating his French with vigorous pantomimic action.

"Ah! a kind of *vendetta*," says the old man, brightening.

"Yes, a civilized *vendetta*. You know what that is, I've no doubt."

"My father, the fisherman, fell in one," says the Corsican, moodily; "he was drowned."

"And the man who killed your father?" asks the American, with some interest.

"Was drowned also. I am the son of my father. My father's slayer was the last of their accursed family, so now I sleep in peace. Would the gentleman like breakfast?" and trade overcomes his romance.

"Yes; place a table for me, Mateo—I think that's what you called yourself—out here on the portico. Give me a flask of your best *chianti*, some fruit, and something to eat, if you've got anything not stuffed with chestnuts. I'll make myself comfortable till the time comes."

"Eggs?" triumphantly suggests the host.

"Yes. Eggs don't taste of chestnuts."

As Mateo goes in to attend to this order, Mr. Barnes mutters to himself, "Always best to take things easy till it's time to act;" and sinking lazily upon the most comfortable stool he can find, gazes meditatively over the exquisite scene that the early morning light is just making distinctly beautiful.

The portico of the inn faces the bay, and is only separated from its torpid ripples by a few feet of shingle and rocks that run out into the blue water. This is now just brightening in the morning sun, rising over the white peaks of the Corsican mountains, that, as usual, in spring, are shrouded in mists. Far out to sea, the lateen sails of fishing boats look like seagulls' wings; in the harbour a score or so of feluccas and speronares from Sardinia and Sicily are hardly moving under the lazy breeze, while the dark low hull of an English gun-boat, which has put into Ajaccio to purchase some supplies of poultry and fruit for her officers' mess, is giving out from her short funnel a black cloud of smoke that indicates she will soon be under weigh for Alexandria to assist at Arabi Pasha's downfall.

Mr. Barnes looks gloomily at her as he says to himself, "Wish that beggar would

sail before her time; it would perhaps save me making a fool of myself." Then rolling a cigarette, he turns, and looking inland up the Bastia road, continues: "No sign of Marina yet. I sent the courier for her at ten o'clock last night. If Corsican horseflesh can do it, she should be here in time. But Corsican horseflesh is at best only polo-pony horseflesh; the roads are slow, and" (looking at his watch) "it is seven o'clock now. If I can't stop these fellows making fools of themselves, and anything happens to him, Heaven pity her! it's a hard world."

With a sigh, Mr. Barnes goes off into a brown study, meditating what a fool he has been to come to Corsica, moufflon shooting, when he might just as well have been shooting some other wild animal on some other part of the earth's surface.

Mr. Barnes is not a typical New Yorker. At first sight he is always suspected of being what is now contemptuously called a dude; but if his dress from its elaboration, almost to the point of affectation, night make an observer suppose him one, his bearing and manner would in a very short time prove that he was also a man, and a man who knew and understood both the world and himself pretty thoroughly. Mr. Barnes' occupation in the twenty-eight years of his life has been killing time. Being blessed with an ample fortune, he had never earned his own living; though he once thought he ought to have a profession, and studied surgery till he discovered that the death rate of the world was ten a year to every practising physician; whereupon, glad of the excuse, Mr. Barnes said he would let his ten men live, and refused to take out his diploma. Being compelled to kill time, he has mostly killed it by killing wild animals. A crack shot of the New York Rifle club has once or twice saved an international match by literally having no nerves at the critical moment when it was absolutely necessary to shoot a bull's eye to win; consequently, before dangerous game, especially tigers, Mr. Barnes is very deadly.

Not averse to the chase in any form, he would gladly have hunted in the preserves of Belgravia and Fifth Avenue, for he had the *entrée* to both English and American society, but he despised a long flirtation with its imperceptible advances, and calculated manœuvres, which he stigmatised as "Snaring canary birds, and not true sport."

Too languid to dance in a ball-room, he would climb the Rocky Mountains to kill a big-horn; consequently, when over a game of Baccarat at a Parisian club, a passing acquaintance, Count Musso Danella, a Corsican, invited him to visit his estates on the island for the purpose of killing moufflon, Mr. Barnes accepted, and within the three weeks preceding the day we meet him, had shot all the moufflon he desired, travelled generally over the island, but had missed seeing what he was most curious about—a *vendetta* in actual progress, and was at Ajaccio, en route for France, when he became engaged in the morning adventure that now occupies him, not on his own account, but for the sake of a young lady he had met in the interior of the island.

The next estate to that of his host in the fair valley of the Gravona, below the far spreading chestnut and beech woods of Bocognano, was one belonging to a family in whose veins flows the blood most honoured and most loved in all Corsica, that of the old-time patriot and liberator, Pasquale Paoli, and the young lady was one of the last of that ancient name.

Count Musso Danella was the guardian of both the girl and her brother,—their father having died while they were children,—and had invited Barnes to visit, with him, his young ward who had just returned from an Italian boarding school, in order to meet her brother, a young naval officer in the service of the French Republic, expected home from a three years' cruise.

"She will return to school no more; they write they will not have her back," says the Count as they ride up the avenue of olive trees, toward the low Corsican house.

"Indeed! Why?" asks Barnes.

"*Per Bacco!* she is too Corsican for them; she loves liberty too well. She ran away from school to hear Gerster sing in Florence one night, and threatened her painting master with an unknown vengeance if he dared to desecrate with daubs from his no-school modern Italian brush, a painting she had just finished. The Italian sent her picture unaltered to me with his complaint; I sent Marina's picture to the Salon, and when it received an honourable mention, I threw the Italian's complaint into the fire!"

"A picture from a girl receive mention at the Paris Salon!" Mr. Barnes gasps in unbelief.

"I think it was as much the subject as the treatment secured its success; for with true girlish vanity she had painted

herself," laughs the Count, as they enter the house. The next instant Barnes sees the original, and then only wonders that the copy, if half a likeness, did not gain the gold medal of the year.

As she rises to receive them, the girl drapes her modern Parisian dress about her, like some old Grecian robe, and outlines a form perfect as her face, which is of the most bewildering, dazzling, Southern beauty, animated by a soul, that, shining through it with changing piquancy of expression, makes it indescribable. To love her would have been to love, perhaps, within the hour a Juliet and Madonna; and, perchance, in one dread moment of her life, a Lady Macbeth—all strangely beautiful and each Marina Paoli.

Barnes, whose descriptive adjectives are limited, called her "a stunner," and was right as regards his own sensations, for she simply appalled him, not perhaps when he first saw her—but afterwards.

As she comes toward them with a smile of welcome, the Count presuming on his guardianship is about to kiss her lips;—the smile changes to a flash of hauteur as she coldly says: "I've grown older now—my hand, please."

While the man of the world with his forty years of Parisian life that cost him fifty, smiling behind his white teeth bends over her fingers, Barnes suddenly thinks that Musso loves her; and that the young girl with her sex's instinct has placed a rampart between his passion and herself.

As Mr. Barnes is introduced, her smile is back again; she exclaims, "An American! a freeman! you can kiss my hand also!"

"You like republicans?"

"I hate tyrants and despise slaves. I should only bow to a Russian or a Turk, but an American—it is different!"

"I'm glad I'm an American," says Mr. Barnes, kissing her hand: and that kiss gave him interest enough in her life to make him turn out of his way, on the day we first see him, to do her a service.

They are friends at once. The girl sings him a strain or two from an opera, accompanying herself on a mandolin. Then, from Italian music, she turns to that of her own island, and chants some old native ballads which are all *lamenti* relating to the *vendetta*—for in Corsica there are no other local songs. This leads to her explaining to Mr. Barnes what the *vendetta* really is; that it is considered a sacred duty to avenge one of the family who falls by another's hand; that the *Rimbecco* is a reproach which is spoken or sung to him who forgets the wrongs of kindred, and a Corsican who did not listen to it would be for ever despised. With this she chants a *Rimbecco* with a wild pathos that shows, though educated in the civilization of the continent, Marina Paoli is still in spirit a Corsican.

With some curiosity he asks her whether there has ever been a *vendetta* in her family.

"Not for three generations," says the girl, "but it always comes in the third, and that is ours. There are only three of us—old Tomasso, who serves me so faithfully and who is my foster-father and would avenge my wrongs as his own; myself, and Antonio, my brother," (her eyes take an expectant look), "the only one of my blood I have to love, whose letter I shall soon receive telling me when I shall place my kiss upon him. Ah! I hear horses' hoofs! *Mia Madre!* if it is he!"

Her face brightens with a great joy and she darts out into the portico. After a pause the Count says: "Would you like to see the picture of the Parisian Salon?"

He draws aside a curtain, disclosing a canvas that as Barnes throws the lamplight on it, develops into a portrait of Marina in the costume of a Corsican peasant with its brilliantly coloured mandile and short skirt, that give to her graceful figure even additional charms; but her face has a dreamy expression, as if her soul was far away from her body, and her eyes look intensely strained, seeking someone that comes not. The attitude is one of expectant passion. Underneath is written, "WAITING!"

"Ah, waiting for her lover! I understand!" laughs Barnes.

"No! Waiting for her brother—he is the only being Marina loves. The two children grew up, as it were, in each other's arms; until three years ago, their lives were one—and now she awaits his coming like an expectant bride. There is no room in her heart for any other love!" remarked Musso moodily.

The words have hardly left him when Marina enters like one inspired. "See," she cries, "his letter! my Antonio's letter!" and she kisses it. "He will be in Corsica to-morrow, and the next day," (a sigh of longing) "with me! I have sent old Tomasso to light fires of good omen on the hills, so that our shepherds on the

higher ranges of del Oro may know their master is returning, and come to give him welcome. I shall wear that dress when next I see him," she points to the picture. "He loved me best as one of his own people!"

"We had better go," whispers Danella to our American. "She will now think only of her brother."

As they take their leave, the Count asks for the bunch of white laurel flowers the girl wears. But she plucks them from her bosom and thrusts them into the hands of the astonished Barnes. Danella scowls threateningly at the young man. Marina noticing, says quickly with a laugh, "Do not be jealous; Mr. Barnes will take them for me to Ajaccio, and if he sees my brother, give Antonio the flowers of his native land and tell him that Marina, who is waiting, sent them, and will rest no more until he gives them back to her. Understand you are not even to smell them; their perfume is all for my brother."

As the two men ride away, she stands looking after them, their eyes beaming with expectation. Backed by the fire-light that streams from the open panes past the iron gratings that defend all windows in this unquiet country, she forms a picture of joy and love that is almost mediæval in its intensity.

"By George! They don't manufacture such girls in Fifth Avenue!" says Mr. Barnes.

"No! Civilization would stunt the growth of such a heart. Marina has the two great native passions—love of country and love of family; but there are none like her, not even in Corsica. While her brother lives she will love no other man."

"But if she should?" suggests laughingly the American.

"Not while I live!" cries the Corsican with a muttered oath and a sudden sinister contraction of his face that tells Barnes his secret. "But you take the road to Ajaccio, and it leaves mine here." On which the two men part with many a kindly farewell, for, though Barnes despises a man who cannot keep his temper, and the Count has the passions of the lower regions, they have been good comrades for their three weeks' shooting, and have bagged much game; which makes all sportsmen feel kindly to one another.

As Barnes rides down the beautiful valley that is watered by the white rapids of the Gravona rushing towards the sea, he smells the perfume of the laurel flowers and sees the fires of welcome lighted upon the hills, and knows that any kindness done to the brother will make the sister his friend; and, though his common sense forbids him to love a volcano, he would do much to gain her esteem.

The next evening he is in Ajaccio; and, thoughtful of his message to Antonio, lounges into the local Club, which with the traditional hospitality of all Corsica is open to foreigners, thinking to find him.

There are but few visitors at that most quiet of all quiet clubs, *The Circle of Ajaccio*, and Barnes at first thinks there are none; but soon angry voices come to him from the next room, followed by a couple of good round home-made Anglo-Saxon oaths that no foreigner could imitate.

Glancing in, he sees two French officers, and an English one who evidently belongs to some British man-of-war in the harbour, as he wears the naval uniform of that country.

The matter of their dispute is the Egyptian question, which up to this time makes very bad blood between the two countries; and, in 1882, before the bombardment of Alexandria, was the cause of even more decided and bitter feeling than now. The controversy has been brought about by an extremely clever cartoon in the London *Punch*, that is lying on the table of the club. This picture represents a gigantic palm tree laden with Egyptian cocoanuts, that France, in the costume of a French officer, is shaking so that the fruit will fall right into the open and capacious jaws of the British lion, who is reclining lazily beneath its branches.

As Mr. Barnes looks in, the climax is reached by the French officer calling the Englishman a liar, and the next instant getting knocked down for his trouble.

The Frenchman gathers himself together, which takes some little time, as the blow was straight from the shoulder, rises, and is about to spring at his opponent, when his comrade stops him, saying "Not now!"

The assaulted man restrains himself, bows and presents his card, in the eagerness of the moment drawing two from his case. The Englishman takes one, leaving the other on the table, and says, "You must excuse me not giving my card in return."

"A brave man!" thinks Barnes. "He has courage enough to refuse a duel."

"And you are an English officer!" says the Frenchman, with a sneer.

"And it is because I am an English

officer that I refuse. To send or accept a challenge is against the orders of the British Admiralty."

"Not quite so brave as I thought him; he fears the British Admiralty," mutters Barnes.

"Ah! you dare not!" says the Frenchman. "You are only fit to fight Egyptians."

"I am very well able to murder you if you wish it," replies the Englishman, "and if you put it on the ground of courage, I'll face both you and a court-martial together."

A meeting is arranged for the next morning at eight sharp, at the little inn by the shore, called *Il Pescatore*, for the Englishman's ship sails at nine. Then the men leave the club, the French officer remarking, "*Demain! à la mort!*"

This affair would not have interested Mr. Barnes greatly; he had once looked on a duel between cow-boys in Texas, and had seen enough blood shed at that meeting between those vagabonds of the wilderness to make him wish never to see another; but, happening a few minutes afterward to stroll into the room where the dispute had taken place, he picked up the card from the table. After one hasty glance at it, and then another to be absolutely sure, he went hurriedly out into the street, and, ten minutes after, a Corsican boy, instructed to ride for his life, was spurring wildly into the darkness up the Bastia road with a dispatch for Musso Danella.

The next morning Mr. Barnes hurried to the inn of *Il Pescatore* for the sake of the girl he had seen waiting so expectantly the coming of her brother; for the card he had picked up in the Ajaccio Club was,

M. Antonio Paoli,

Sous Lieutenant,

Marine Français

CHAPTER II.

COMING.

MR. BARNES divides his time on the little balcony of the inn where we first meet him, between alternately gazing impatiently up the Bastia road for the dust of moving horses, glancing at his watch and looking at the English gun-boat in hopes she will sail; all the time industriously smoking cigarettes. He is interrupted while rolling the third of these little soothers of human nature, by the return of Mateo with his breakfast.

"Put it on that table there."

"Signor, this is the shady side of the balcony," says the innkeeper.

"But the other has the view! That's the ticket! Now those fellows can't come here and kill each other, by any chance, without my getting my eye on them! That's better *chianti* than I thought you had in the island." Saying this, Mr. Barnes proceeds to make his breakfast with a very tolerable appetite.

Mateo anxiously waits near him, and at last asks eagerly, "Do you think these men who are to kill each other will come soon?"

"Yes; but what does that matter to you?"

"They might want some breakfast also. They might be hungry before they kill each other."

"Ah! that's what interests you," laughs Mr. Barnes. "You only look at the duello from a gastronomical and business standpoint—you've never seen one?"

"No. We kill in Corsica, but not in that way. Have you enjoyed a duel before, Signor?" remarks Mateo, removing the

emptied egg-shells from before his guest and arranging the fruit.

"Yes, once; between cow-boys in Texas. They killed each other in ten seconds. It will suit me very well never to view another."

"I should have liked to have seen it; it must have been grand!" mumbles the old man.

But the recollection of the most terrible sight of his life makes Mr. Barnes anxious about his present episode. He rises and again looks up the road coming from the interior—not even a dust cloud—not a sign of her.

"If Marina comes, her brother can't fight if he has any feeling for her. I couldn't, with such a sister as that. I'd take no chances of leaving her alone in the world," he half mutters.

Rolling another cigarette, he is about to sit down again, when, as he turns toward the water, he sees a boat rowed by a couple of stout native fishermen rapidly round one of the points of rocks that outline the little bay. A moment after, her bow, driven by a vigorous stroke or two, is well up on the shelving beach. In her stern sits the English officer of the night before, accompanied by another, who is doubtless his second.

"The beggars are ahead of her," Mr. Barnes mutters. "I'll have to do what I can myself. Anyhow, it's best to see the Englishman first."

As the two officers land, and look along the beach, and then up at the inn, apparently expecting to see their antagonist, a wild thought flashes through Barnes' brain: Marina's brother is not yet here—why not present himself as the brother's representative, offer an apology from him to the Englishman, and send him back to his ship, which has already hoisted in her boats, and is evidently about to leave the harbour. A grim smile passes across his face at this novel idea, but, even as he glances about to see that the Corsican is not yet near enough to prevent his plan succeeding, he rejects it as a trick unworthy of him, feeling certain that if Marina ever discovered he had juggled with what she would consider her brother's honour, she would doubtless hate him for such impertinent interference.

The next instant he has taken his line, and impatiently tossing away his half-smoked cigarette, he calls out, "I say, you chaps down there! Come up here and have some breakfast with me! I haven't seen an English face for a month! I'm Barnes, of New York!"

The two British officers start in astonishment at the familiarity of his address, and one of them, the principal of the affair, after a short pause, says, taking off his cap, and bowing in almost mock politeness, "Much obliged for your kind invitation, but we are not hungry, and are here on an affair of business, *Mister* Barnes, of New York!"

The other, a more morose creature, mutters to himself "Curse the infernal impudence of Barnes, of New York!" during this, taking out of the boat a couple of ominous-looking packages.

"They think I'm a fool," cogitates Barnes, of New York, "and that's half the negotiation. An acknowledged idiot can generally drive a better bargain than a wise man; people are not on their guard against his wisdom. That makes a great deal of what is commonly called 'Fool's luck.'"

Mr. Barnes, of New York, has the peculiar faculty of always leaving as a first impression the fact that he is an utter imbecile, though on further acquaintance most people think they had made a mistake.

A moment after, he shouts in reply, "That's the business I want to see you about! Come up and have a glass of wine with me in the shade. That'll be better than my going down to you. That shingle below, now the sun is on it, would roast a shrimp."

The two officers hold an undertone consultation, and then ascend the half-decayed little wooden stairway that leads from the shore to the inn. They are both young men. One, the principal in the affair, is probably about thirty years of age, and wears the full-dress uniform of a lieutenant in Her Majesty's navy: the other, who is but little over twenty, that of a midshipman in the same service. They are both generally very much the same sort of fellows who fought under Nelson, and are described by Captain Marryat, with the addition of a century's advance in refinement. The man of the night before is fair, reasonably tall, and apparently amiable; the other, darker, shorter, and more inclined to be punctiliously blood-thirsty, as seconds in affairs of honour generally are. He has rather a bull-dog countenance, and, with the recklessness of youth, is apparently determined his principal shall smell powder.

Arrived on the little balcony, the latter advances with quarter-deck decision towards Mr. Barnes, who has taken another fruitless glance up the Bastia road, and speaks to the point.

"You say you want to see us on this affair—what affair?"

"*His* affair of honour—he's come here to fight, hasn't he?" replies the American, indicating the principal by his glance.

"With whom?" inquires the second, diplomatically.

"With Monsieur Paoli, sous lieutenant in the French navy!" says Mr. Barnes.

"Ah! you came then as a friend of the Frenchman?"

"No! I am here on my own hook!"

"Then by what right——?" The Englishman is drawing himself up haughtily.

"I am a friend of his sister!" interrupts the American.

"His sister!" ejaculates the second in surprise. The Englishmen look at each other, and the principal turns away with a soft look in his eyes.

His second does not regard the matter in the same light, as he sneers, "Ah, breakers ahead! I guess you're his sister's lover, and perhaps are spoons enough on the sister to take the sister's brother's place!"

"I am not spoons on the sister, but if I did take his sister's brother's place in front of you, sir, you would not like it. I am Barnes, of New York!" The American finds it difficult to keep his temper.

This peculiar repetition of "*Barnes, of New York,*" evidently sets his hearer to thinking, for he suddenly exclaims, "*Not Barnes, of New York,* the celebrated rifle shot, who won the International off-hand cup, and whose shooting with the pistol in Paris astonished the Frencheys so much, the *Times* said?"

"That's my name!" The answer is neither modest nor logical, but it is true, for Barnes' skill with all kinds of fire-arms has made his name celebrated the world over.

"Then you're the man who can drive tacks, split cards and hit swinging bullets?" Both the Britons look at him with much respect, for a man to be admired in England has only to beat everybody else at some sport that calls for nerve and pluck; and Mr. Barnes in the shooting gallery, or before the butts in the open field, is, to use an Americanism, "on top of the heap."

"No! I don't care to stand before you," says the second. "I'd like to have one more chance of seeing England; as I will, in spite of those brutes of Egyptians, the cholera, and all that; but before your pistol I'd have none!"

This speech has no fear in it, it is merely a statement of fact.

"But we must settle this matter quickly," he goes on. The *Vulture* (he points to the gun-boat) "will sail in half an hour. That Frenchman must be here in ten minutes or we return to our ship."

"Then let me give you some wine; it always makes human nature more kindly! —Mateo! glasses for the gentlemen!"

While this is being done, Barnes goes out of the inn, and takes another long searching gaze up the Bastia road. At first he can see no sign of moving life in the early morning light; after a time he is almost sure there is a little cloud of rising dust between two hills some miles distant. If that is she it will be fifteen minutes before Marina comes. As he turns away, two figures in French uniforms are rapidly approaching him along the road that comes from Ajaccio; and he knows that though the sister may be too late, the brother will be in time. Returning to the Englishmen again, he quietly says: "I know the interference of an outsider in such a matter as this is unusual, and may be impertinent, but before you fight the man I want to tell you of his sister."

After a moment's pause, the principal now for the first time speaks. His voice, in contrast to his second's, is full of feeling; his manner cultured, as he says: "His sister? What can any man's sister have to do with a miserable affair of this kind?" His voice softens on the word sister, while the other, his second, turns his eyes seaward, as if looking towards his home in old England.

"A great deal," is the reply. "Have you no sister?"

"Yes, a dear one!" says the sailor. "But my sister in this matter takes her chance of losing a brother, and his sister must do the same. For God's sake don't talk to me of home and sisters, and all that, at such a moment as *this!*"

As he hastily drinks a glass of wine to conceal an emotion that does him honour, Barnes now knows that, if he makes no mistake, his point is won.

"I won't talk to you of your sister; I'll only speak to you of his." And he gives them in a few words a description of the old Corsican home on the slope of the

mountain; of the young and beautiful girl he has seen only the other day; her romantic temperament that has but one passion, her love for her brother; the only one of her blood upon earth; and her expectation of that very day meeting him on his return from long foreign service.

"After what I have told you," Barnes concludes, "will you be the man to prevent that meeting?"

The question is put *straight*, and is answered *squarely*. "God forbid! Not if I can avoid it!"

"You can avoid it!"

"How?"

"By making an apology!"

This is answered with equal squareness and more force by the second. "I'm d—d if he shall! I won't let him!"

Mr. Barnes wonders how he got on to the quarter-deck, and more, why he was selected by one who is evidently a gentleman, to support him in an affair of this delicate nature.

But the principal interrupts his second, saying, "You have enlisted my sympathy for the young lady you describe, but her brother is a naval officer like me. Your appeal would do equally well to his commanding officer to prevent his going into action; and how do you suppose his commanding officer would answer you? Besides, I did not challenge the beggar; I don't want to kill him; I only want to protect myself."

"And if he pops at my friend, my friend shall pop at him!" rejoins the second, who is now becoming excited.

Barnes pays no attention to this remark, but waits till he catches the eye of the principal, then looking him full in the face, says, "Very well, if he kills you——"

"There'll be one less Englishman for the Egyptians to shoot at!"

"And if you kill him?" says Mr. Barnes.

"I have told you already I don't want to kill him. I don't mind taking my chance of life or death on the quarter-deck along with the rest in action, though I want no private blood-stains upon me; but a man, with these foreign chaps out here, must uphold the honour of the British sailor and that flag!" He points to the beautiful ensign of his country, floating from the gaff of the distant gunboat, that wherever seen, the world over, means protection for the Anglo-Saxon race. "Situated as I am, would you apologise?" he asks.

"Yes, if I were in the wrong!" says Mr. Barnes.

"But I am not in the wrong; at least, not more so than the other. This miserable affair all came about from a picture of *Punch*, intended to make men laugh, not murder each other."

"Ah, yes, political cartoons, when witty, make one side laugh, and the other side savage; I wonder how many murders *Punch* and *Puck* have produced!"

The young naval officer is now laughing at the remembrance of the picture. "It was so awfully jolly, you see. The lazy British lion—ha! ha!—was eating all the fruit the French monkey was shaking down to him"—and he now describes the cut to his companion, who bursts into a loud guffaw and says, "A deuced nice mouthful it will be for the lion; I wonder how we chaps'll like the dish, who have to do the crunching for the lion!"

Mr. Barnes takes another look up the Bastia road; the dust cloud has left the hills and is now coming across the plain along the banks of the Gravona; it is a little larger, consequently nearer. But the two French officers are within three minutes' walk of the inn. He catches his man's eye, and now strikes for the last time, saying, "For some political cause, it hardly matters what now, you got into a dispute that was not personal."

"Not till he called me a liar!"

"For which you knocked him down; you've had the best of the affair so far," insinuates the mediator.

"You see a man has to do something when a man calls him that; he can't swallow such a name; I can't, anyway!" rejoins the Englishman.

"Yes," said Mr. Barnes, diplomatically, "I should not like to have anyone call me a liar; he might be telling the truth, you know; I should have knocked him down too, but having knocked him down I should not care to kill him."

"Neither do I!"

"Then why not tender an apology—will you?

"Ye-es!" says the young man rather reluctantly, after consideration.

"Then you do it against my advice, and if you do send one, curse me if I'll carry it to a crowing Parlez-vous; I wouldn't mind so much if it wasn't a frog-eater!" With these words the second rises, goes to the other end of the balcony, gazes at the gun-boat, and whistles under his breath the air of an old sea-song.

Barnes glances after him in disgust; he likes bull-dog determination, but is too much of a cosmopolitan to have anything but contempt for bull-dog brains and insular prejudice.

"Nevertheless, I shall offer an apology," says the English gentleman, after looking at the English bull-dog with a slight smile, "but one that can in no way degrade me or lower the uniform I wear."

"That's the answer of a brave man and a brick!" cries the enthusiastic Barnes, grasping his hand. "I wouldn't have you do more."

"But in case he should not receive my explanation?"

"He shall receive it; I'll guarantee that he does. I have something here" (Mr. Barnes is thinking of Marina's laurel flowers) "that will make him receive any reasonable explanation."

"Ah! something from his sister;" says the Englishman. "I'm glad of that; I've no wish to injure him more than I have done, and no wish that he should injure me. My friend there is not just the man I should have liked to have brought with me on such an affair. Though true as steel and brave as any, he's too hot-headed." He speaks this under his breath.

"The pugnacity of youth," suggests Barnes in the same tone.

"Yes. I should not have brought him, but none of my ward-room mess-mates could get leave. I'm sorry if anything he has said annoyed you."

"Not a tall! I took it for what it was worth!"

Barnes is here interrupted by the object of their colloquy advancing to them, and saying to his comrade, "You have decided to send an apology?"

"Yes! I shall simply say that I am sorry I knocked him down!"

"No more?"

"Not another word!"

"And if he does not receive it?"

"Then I'll defend my life and my honour as best I can," comes the reply.

"I'll take that message with a great deal of pleasure!" says the second.

"Why?" this question is from Barnes.

The answer comes straight as a shot. "Because I know Frenchy will never receive it. Curse him!" With that this British mastiff produces two old-fashioned ship's pistols, of the kind used in the last generation, and begins to examine and test them. The name of their maker, Jarvis, and the date of their manufacture, 1854, is stamped upon them.

"You're not going to use those things?" says Mr. Barnes, glancing with contempt at the weapons, and noticing their age and maker.

"Why not? They are the only ones I could get without having questions asked; they'll kill a man as well as the best duelling pistol ever made."

"Are you much of a shot?" remarked Barnes to the principal.

"The worst in the world!"

"Then you are just the man to be deadly with one of these!" Barnes picks up the weapons, and examines them. They are simply old percussion pistols, with very large bores, long barrels, and timber enough in their stocks to make a pair of walking-canes. He puts them down, noting as he does so that one has scratched upon its stock, apparently done in some moment of idleness with a knife, a name, "Edwin Gerard Anstruther," though the other is free from all inscription. He has been rather curious to discover who the English officer is, and notes this with some interest, as the two men have carefully avoided calling each other by name during their interview with him.

Mr. Barnes, however, continues, "I'm morally certain a crack shot, if he pointed one of these things straight at his man, would miss him; but a duffer with a pistol would be sure not to hold true, and would be very liable to blow the top of his opponent's head off. You're not anxious to do that, are you?"

"N-o!" slowly says the Englishman.

"Then I'll teach you how to miss him." With that he takes a couple of sighting shots, discharging the pistols at the face of the cliff that is near him, and noting with careful accuracy the places where the bullets struck. "Ah, now I can tell you exactly what they'll do at twelve paces, as they both shoot pretty much the same. Their elevation is near enough, but hold either of them two feet to the right of your man and your ball'll go plump through him."

"And if," says the second with a laugh, "you hold two feet to the left of him, how then?"

"Then, standing where one of you must probably stand, you'd have a very fair chance of bagging one of your Corsican boatmen."

"Then what shall I do to miss him?" inquires the lieutenant.

"Shoot right straight at him, and he's safe as if he wasn't shot at;" triumphantly replies Barnes.

During this dissertation upon fire-arms, the English combatant has been looking seaward. His nautical eye has caught a sign of the immediate departure of his vessel, for he suddenly says, "If my opponent doesn't come soon, he'll not find me here. I can wait but little longer. The *Vulture* is taking up her slack cable."

The second, who has been looking anxiously down the Ajaccio road and has spied the two French officers, cries quickly, "That's your man, isn't it?"

"Yes," responds the other, and then hurriedly says, bowing politely, "I am much obliged to you, Mr. Barnes of New York; you will excuse our not giving our names and asking you to forget our faces, for were this affair known—end how it may—it would mean a court-martial for both of us."

"You can be sure I'll forget to-morrow I ever saw you! Not complimentary but satisfactory," laughs the American.

The lieutenant shortly adds, "I shall remember my promise; you have my word." Then the two Britons descend the stairs, the midshipman remarking to his companion, *sotto voce*, "That American, Barnes of New York, is a devilish queer bird!"

As they disappear, the two men in French uniform are just entering the inn; but the dust cloud on the Bastia road is now not two miles away. Circling into the air like a tropic waterspout, it is coming as fast as tired horses can bring it. By the aid of his field-glass Barnes discovers, in this cloud, moving forms; one a female figure, eager and impatient, advancing before the rest. Something in its graceful pose tells him it is Marina. If he can postpone her brother's meeting till she comes, no man with blood in his body could fight a duel if that sister implored him to desist. Barnes turns hurriedly to the man whose face tells him he is the one to whom he must address himself, but as he advances he hears him whisper to the erect military figure that strides at his side, "Remember, André, it is '*à la mort!*'"

CHAPTER III.

À LA MORT!

THE man to whom these ominous words are addressed is one of the officers of the French garrison at Ajaccio. He smiles a grim smile and simply says, "I would not have come out with you had I supposed you meant anything else, Paoli; there is but one way to destroy the shame of that brutal brand;" glancing significantly at a deep black discolouration on the young Corsican's face. "Believe me, I have been in too many affairs before not to bring my principal out of this one with honour!"

And he says truly, for André de Belloc is lately from the department of Algeria, where a greater licence exists in the custom of the duello than is permitted in other divisions of France. He wears on his breast medals for gallantry in the Franco-German war, and the sanguinary street fights of the Parisian Commune, but is most widely known for his determined conduct in several desperate meetings forced upon him by his brother officers in that portion of Africa to which France sends her best troops to gain the practice of war. Like most other deadly men, Captain de Belloc has a kindly disposition, and, until strife is absolutely forced upon him, a very peaceable manner.

"Understand me!" he continues; "you place this matter utterly and wholly in my hands. In this affair, Paoli, I am your commanding officer!"

"Entirely! All I want is to get face to face with the man who placed this upon me—and then——!"

The young Corsican makes a significant gesture and his face becomes deadly pale under all its sailor tan of sun and wind, bringing the mark he touches slightly with his hand into vivid contrast with his complexion. This is, like his sister's, one peculiar to the blondes of the Latin race, and found only in Castilians and Italians of the purest race and blood, exquisitely fair in contrast to their dark, flashing eyes; in women, giving great beauty; and in men, great nobility of expression. The voice of the young man would be almost that of Marina were it not full of suppressed bitterness. He wears the French naval uniform of his rank, and looks taller and more dignified to Barnes than that gentleman's remembrance of his appearance the night before; but no man ever seems very commanding immediately after recovering from a knock-down blow. As he half hears, half guesses this portion of their conversation, the American knows that he has a more difficult task before him with the Corsican than he had supposed; one in which the chance of effecting his object is small if not wholly desperate. However, he steps up to the two men and begs to speak to Monsieur Antonio Paoli.

At his words the young man hesitates for a moment, and then says, "You must excuse me for a short time, sir; after I have seen those gentlemen down there I am at your service. At present they claim my attention!" He points to the Englishmen, for he and de Belloc are now on the balcony of the inn, looking down at their two opponents, who are anxiously pacing the shingle and glancing uneasily at their man-of-war, whose funnel is now pouring out one solid mass of deep black smoke.

"If you knew my errand, I think you would give me a minute before that other business."

At the American's first word, André de Belloc has turned towards him; while he is speaking, the Frenchman is studying his face; he now says with military abruptness, "I have seen you before, sir; you have been in Algeria?"

"Once! Lion shooting!" replies Barnes. "And now I remember you, Captain de Belloc!"

"Ah! Is it not Monsieur Barnes, of New York? For the moment I had forgotten your face, but I always remember your shot at the black lion! It's lucky, Antonio, you have not to face Mr. Barnes' pistol this morning; but pardon me—M. Antonio Paoli! M. Barnes, of New York!"

It is curious how appellations hang to men; that "of New York," by chance applied at first, had followed Barnes all over Europe, until now half the untravelled foreigners who knew him, imagined New York was a family estate of his; and one or two ladies at Monte Carlo and similar places had made desperate love to him on account of his surpassingly fair inheritance, for they had heard New York was a great and rich city.

As the two young men bow, Mr. Barnes whispers, "Can't you give me one minute?"

De Belloc, catching this, says hastily, "Yes, one minute! I shall not want you, Antonio, until I have had a few words with those gentlemen down there."

"Thanks! Very much!" says Barnes, as the captain goes down the stairs, carrying in his hand a couple of cavalry sabres and a pair of French duelling small-swords.

"You have a message for me—from—from whom?" says the boy, for with his twenty-three years he is hardly yet a man; but as he asks, he looks as if even now he guessed whence the message came, for the fire of battle has left his eyes and a softer light is in them that makes them very beautiful.

"From one that you left a child, but who is now a woman; whom but a night ago I saw waiting for your coming in the old house of your family; the fires of welcome for you blazing on the hills around. If the Englishman offers any accommodation, think of her, and, for her sake, accept it; for this is from—your sister!" says Barnes, pressing the laurel flowers of Marina, now faded and dead, but even more fragrant in their death than in their life, into his hand. Then he gives Antonio the message that she sent in almost her words, and with a feeling that makes him eloquent, for the thought of the girl and her love for her brother carry him away from his every-day self.

"From my sister! From Marina!" gasps the boy, kissing the flowers, while tears of affection and longing come into his eyes. "For her sake—yes!" But as he passes his hand over his face he touches the mark of the blow, the fire in his eyes burns up the tears, and his look becomes almost that of a savage.

"Remember your sister!" pleads Barnes.

"I will remember my sister, for she would not wish to see me more if I came back to her polluted by that brute's hand."

Barnes is about to speak again, but the voice of André de Belloc comes from below. "Quick, Antonio! Your opponent's ship is about to sail, and time presses!"

The young man starts. "To think that I could linger with that man so near me!" he mutters, and then says, hastily, "When this is over I'll thank you for being my sister's messenger. Have no fear for me. Marina's flowers shall be my talisman!" He places them in his breast very tenderly, but goes down to the beach carrying in his face the look of a man who has an insult to avenge, and who means to avenge it.

Barnes turns his eyes towards the Bastia road—the dust cloud is still a mile away—it will be five minutes before the sister comes. A little time, but on it hangs her brother's fate.

Mr. Barnes slowly follows the young man half down the wooden stairs, and from a little platform watches the affair that now moves to a climax on the beach below. The scene, in contrast to the action on it, is calm and placid, and lighted by the rising sun, now high enough to give it all the mellow colours that make so much of the beauty in a southern picture. To the left the quiet town, but half awakened to its lazy, tropic day, lies white and peaceful in its groves of olive and orange and little hillside vineyards. In front of it a few light-rigged craft of the Mediterranean sit sluggish in the harbour; a little farther from the shore the gunboat rests upon the water, her hull half obscured by a mass of smoke.

Opposite, the red granite rocks of *Les Isles Encarnadine* rise upright from the sea, that from their base spreads across in one vast mass of deep, blue water, without a ripple to make it white, or sea-gull's wing to ruffle its surface, straight to the little beach of shingle that, outlined by two small rocky points, makes the arena upon which the four men stand to arbitrate a dispute of this generation by the sanguinary code of a darker and more cruel age. The two seconds are in conference in the centre, each with his principal a few paces in his rear.

The English lieutenant is abstractedly picking up pebbles and throwing them into the water, keeping an ear, however, on his representative's negotiations; apparently relying on Mr. Barnes' assurance, he does not expect the affair will end very seriously. The young Corsican, on the contrary, stands erect, watching impatiently André de Belloc, and only anxious to face the Englishman, upon whom his eye, whenever it rests, glares with passionate anger.

Old Mateo, who has during the preceding events been engaged in hanging out linen to dry upon the cacti and orange trees of his garden, now comes down, and gazing intently over Barnes' shoulder whispers to him, "Those English are queer people; that one there does not appear to hate; but the Corsican—*Diavolo!* If the other had a hundred lives, they would not be enough to make him happy!"

As he notes this appearance in the men, Barnes himself begins to have an idea that his mediation has been a mistake. The next minute, as the affair develops, he begins to see how fatal has been his error.

The first words that come up to him are from Antonio's second.

"I have not had the pleasure of hearing your name as yet, Monsieur; permit me to again introduce myself as André de Belloc, Captain in the Chasseurs d'Afrique, Army of France."

"I decline to give my name, or that of my principal, in return!" says the English midshipman. "For this reason: the custom of your army does not forbid dueling; the British Admiralty does. If this gets out *we* risk a court-martial, *you* don't!"

The Frenchman starts angrily at this uncompromising declaration; but recovering himself he says haughtily, "All the same, you could have trusted your name to me with perfect safety; your uniform proves you a gentleman" (this with a slight sneer), "so I shall not stand upon strict etiquette and withdraw my man."

His face is sterner than it was before the Englishman's unlucky speech. Had it not contained an insinuation that, in case of an investigation, his name was not safe in de Belloc's knowledge and honour, that gentleman might have been in kinder mood and a different termination been made to the affair.

"And now to the business in hand," says the French officer. "My friend, who has placed his honour in my charge, will meet yours either with small-swords or cavalry sabres; I have brought them with me in pairs of equal length, weight and design; the small-swords are the weapons of the civilian, the sabres"—de Belloc takes one of them in his hand and looks at it kindly—"are the weapons of the soldier. Which do you choose?"

"Neither, if you please; I know too

much for that. You don't get any advantage of me in that way. I'm no innocent, to let my man, who doesn't fence, be chopped to pieces by your man who does; and so I've brought these two good British barkers, that'll do the business just as well as any fancy weapons!" and the English middy, with a smile at his own far-sightedness, produces the two ship's pistols.

At this unfortunate speech the cigarette he has been carefully rolling tears in Barnes' hands. He could assault the man for making it; for though he was doing no more than his duty in protecting the rights and safety of his principal, if safety there could be in such an affair, still he was doing it with so little tact and discretion, that every word he said contained an implied unfairness on the part of de Belloc, that jarred each nerve in that punctilious Frenchman's body.

"If that beggar keeps on in that strain," says Barnes to Mateo, "in another minute the two seconds 'll be fighting themselves." Here he pulls out his tobacco-pouch and begins to manufacture carefully another cigarette. This devotion of Barnes to the smoking habit implies no lack of interest in the affair he watches; had he been about to stand before the Englishman's pistol himself he would have still rolled and smoked cigarettes.

Indeed, this remark of the American had nearly become the truth; for at one time during the sailor's address, de Belloc has been about to angrily reply, but checking himself, he bites his lip and murmurs savagely, "*Après!*" These insinuations made him bitter, and probably produced the astounding proposition he afterwards advanced.

However, he now merely remarks that "Swords in Europe are considered the proper thing in settling disputes among gentlemen, and that he had supposed an English officer would understand the use of the weapon he carried at his side when on duty."

"But my friend is the challenged party," answers the Englishman; "and though I don't know much about these affairs, still I know that we have the right to choose the tools: as such I demand pistols. Besides, we can't stay here over five minutes now; and the only thing that can decide our business in that time is what I insist on using!"

"Very well, Monsieur, I waive my proposition; we'll use your pistols," remarks Captain de Belloc, examining the weapons the Englishman offers to him.

After an inspection he continues, "These do not seem arms of precision, and may not carry as sighted. Has your friend"—he indicates the lieutenant by a move of his head—"ever used these before?"

"Not that I know of!" says the second; and, turning to his principal, he asks, "Have you ever fired these barkers?"

"Never in my life!" is the unhesitating reply.

"That is sufficient—we will use your weapons, Monsieur!" Whereupon the two seconds begin to carefully load the pistols, the young Englishman watching them carelessly, and the Corsican doing the same, with more eagerness. On de Belloc's picking up the sabre, Antonio had removed his uniform coat, and since that time has been standing in his shirt and trowsers, a model of youthful grace. On seeing them load the pistols he immediately replaces it, and buttoning it up tight to the throat, leaves no white spot to attract his opponent's aim, save where Marina's laurel flowers show upon his breast.

Old Mateo, who, though excited at the thought of blood, never forgets business, now suddenly whispers to Barnes, "If one of those men is wounded, I have a nice bed in my inn, free from vermin and dirt. Couldn't you have him brought here? My charges shall be for the Englishman, little; and for the Corsican, nothing. I heard you call him Paoli, and anyone would do something for that name. Please do what you can to help an old innkeeper; it will be better than taking a bleeding man to the city for the surgeon to see!"

At these last words Barnes suddenly starts, whistles meditatively for a moment, and then drops his cigarette, for now he sees a way to postpone; which, under the peculiar circumstances, means ending the whole matter.

"Thank you, Mateo!" he cries. "You've a level head on your old body!" and goes quickly down to the beach.

The pistols have just been loaded, and de Belloc has chosen his weapons as Barnes approaches the men.

"You must excuse an outsider speaking at such a moment, but outsiders generally see most of the game, and I do this in the name of common humanity. You've forgotten something; there's no surgeon upon the ground!"

The Frenchman looks suddenly about—

"You are right, M. Barnes," he says; "I had until now presumed that these gentlemen had brought their ship's doctor with them."

"Why, we had counted on your regimental saw-bones!" replies the English midshipman.

"He would have been here, but he has lately joined us; and not being acclimatized, he was suddenly struck down this morning by the malarial fever common to this island!"

"Our surgeon couldn't leave the ship on the morning of our sailing; to have pressed the matter might have given our captain a hint of our business; and then, you'd have whistled for us in vain."

At this both seconds go to their principals, and after a moment's conference with Antonio, the captain turns and says, "The gentleman I represent still demands that the affair shall go on."

"A surgeon does not count for much when it is *à la mort*, as this must be!" interrupts the young Corsican, with a laugh that has a cruel ring.

His English antagonist had been on the point of speaking; but at these words he checks himself. The second answers for him.

"All right, it's as fair for one as the other; what's a Frenchman's chance is an Englishman's chance; surgeon or no surgeon, we'll fight it out! So now we'll toss for corners as quickly as you please, for that ship is hoisting in her side ladders, and when she sails we must be on the quarter-deck! Give me your lucky penny," he continues, turning to the lieutenant, "I'll win the shadiest side for you."

The latter silently takes from his vest-pocket a silver English crown piece, and hands it to his second. A moment after the toss is made, and the Englishman wins. The distance is settled at twelve paces, the standing points marked on the shingle by a couple of small white stones.

The two seconds turn to their principals to place them in position, and give them their weapons. As they do so, the English sailor gives back to his principal the coin, saying, "Here's your lucky penny; it's won you the place with the least sun in your eyes, that's something." The English lieutenant pockets the coin, but as he does this whispers hurriedly to his comrade, and the midshipman, after a few words of apparent dissent, comes again to the centre, and calling de Belloc to him, says in a tone significantly careless, "By-the-bye, I forgot to state that my man, before this affair goes any further, wishes to apologize!"

"To apologize?" echoes de Belloc in surprise.

"Yes, Mr. Frenchman, he desires me to say for him that he's sorry he knocked that young man down, blackened his eye, and spoiled his beautiful features!" The very nonchalance of the Englishman's tone is almost an insult; in fact, as he speaks, Barnes knows that he wishes to make it one, though compelled by his principal to say the words.

"Very well!" says de Belloc after a short gloomy pause, during which his face changes from rage to a sneering smile. "You have made your proposition! Now hear mine!" his voice coming from him very slowly, but high and clear as a bugle call. "The gentleman you represent wishes to apologise! Then let him come here and stand beside me and passively, on his face, receive from my friend the same brutal blow he placed upon his; and after he has beaten him, the man I speak for shall receive his amend, and not before!"

A dead silence falls upon the group as they listen to this most atrocious demand—it lasts but an instant—then the English bull-dog has clenched his fist as if he were about to strike de Belloc.

But he is put aside, and the English gentleman, his principal, stands in his place confronting the Frenchman. As he has heard the monstrous indignity proposed for him, a deep flush of rage and shame has rushed over his face: but now every drop of blood has left it, and he stands pale as one who dies of the cobra bite which turns the blood to water; and looks as deadly as that fatal snake, as he says very quietly, "It may be the custom among Frenchmen to be beaten like curs, but we English have not as yet acquired the habit. You, sir," (turning to the Corsican) "wish my life—you shall have your chance at it—but I shall also shoot to kill!"

To this Paoli makes no direct reply, but says hoarsely to de Belloc, "Give me the pistol!" and his eyes still answer to the Englishman, "*à la mort!*"

Had not Barnes induced the latter to apologize he would not have received the insulting proposition from de Belloc, which changed him from a man only anxious to defend his own life, into one thirsting for his opponent's. But Barnes' efforts have

introduced a still more dangerous factor to Marina's brother into the meeting; for now the young Englishman comes to him and in an undertone says, "I've kept one promise, you see with what result; common sense must tell you I can't keep the other—that gentleman standing opposite me says it is '*à la mort!*' I shall do my best to make it so. When you taught me how to miss my man, *you also showed me how to hit him.* Aim two feet to the right and the bullet will go plump through him; at twelve paces, I believe you said. Many thanks, Mr. Barnes!"—and he walks to his firing point.

Without the knowledge born of Barnes' experiments with the pistols, Marina's brother would have been comparatively safe.

Half a second after, the young Englishman, who cannot even in this desperate moment of his life forget his British habit of fairness, speaks again, this time to Captain de Belloc and aloud.

"I'll take no undue advantage in this affair. Tell your man that Mr. Barnes, a few minutes since, sighted these pistols; that they both shoot at our distance about two feet to the left of where they are pointed;" and then he mutters hoarsely to himself, "My mother!" for he knows that his words have put great addition to the peril that is on him; and he has still a mother living in England, and is thinking that, perchance, she will never see him again in life. Yet with that name upon his lips he is still ready to kill.

At the Englishman's generous words, his second mutters to himself, "The chivalric fool—he's given away the trick of the weapons!"

The French captain looks at Barnes for confirmation, for it is hard to believe that any man could so put peril on himself, for an idea.

But the American simply says, "It is gospel truth! I sighted those two pistols, and the one with the name on the butt shoots almost two feet to the left of the point it is held at; the other a little less—about one foot nine inches. You know my skill with the weapon. I pledge my honour, de Belloc, that I am correct. And now that I've made everything as fair and as dangerous for one as for the other, I hope you'll kick me for a meddling fool!" Here Mr. Barnes thinks he hears a sound of horses' hoofs in the far distance, and remembering Marina, runs up the stairs cursing himself for the danger his experiment has placed upon these two men's lives.

A moment after, the French officer, taking a step towards the English lieutenant, bows and says, "Had I known you before, I should not have made that proposition that gave you pain, but now gives me greater, for you are not only a brave but a true man. I salute you, sir!" And he does so in the simple manner of a soldier who desires to honour a comrade. Then turning to the young Corsican, he remarks, "I advise you, Paoli, to remember M. Barnes' advice; he knows more about pistol shooting than any man I ever saw," and with that passes to his station to give the signal to fire.

From the balcony of the inn, through Barnes' field-glass, Marina can be seen coming, but her horse is tired and lame. Two men are following her through the dust. One is her foster-father—old Tomasso, the other Count Musso Danella. She rides as if she thought she was riding for her brother's life, which can be to her, at best, a guess, for Barnes' hurried note to Danella only mentioned that her presence here might save Antonio from committing folly.

She is still half a mile away and will be—nay, is—too late; for at that instant from below come the sharp reports that say the men have fired.

The two pistols speak, almost together, the sound from the Corsican's a trifle the first. As the smoke rolls away Antonio is standing, though he seems to have placed all the weight of his body upon his left leg. Ths Englishman staggers and would fall, but his second, running to him, supports him, and says, "Where is it, old fellow? Are you much hurt?"

To which the other gasps—"It's here—in my side;" pressed his hand upon the spot, groans, then looks surprised, and then relieved, as he takes from his vest-pocket his lucky silver crown with the pistol bullet flattened against and imbedded in it.

"How do you feel now?" says Barnes, who has hurried to him to do what could be done without instruments; for though not a practising surgeon and dignified by a diploma, everything that the American did he did thoroughly, and he was a better doctor than many who wrote M.D. after their names.

"A good deal better now, thanks to my lucky penny!" replies the Englishman, looking at the coin and pocketing it with affection. "I'll not forget it in a hurry!"

Which was true, for its impression made his ribs sore for many a day after.

"Yes, I hardly think you'll die just at present,"—but Barnes is interrupted by the voice of de Belloc, which comes cool as ice,—

"Under these circumstances my principal demands another shot!"

"Which at present I haven't time to give him!"

"Why not—you are not disabled, and my principal can stand?"

This is the first intimation that the Corsican is wounded.

The English officer takes one look to seaward, then speaks straight at de Belloc, his voice ringing out as if on his quarter-deck. "That gun-boat is now moving ahead to break ground with her anchor; in a moment she will sail for Alexandria to go into action. When that ship goes under the fire of the Egyptian guns we must be upon her quarter-deck!"—The other has already run down to their boat to cast it off from the shore.

"There is time yet!"

"There is too little now!—You are a French officer, don't stand between an English one and his duty!"

But the young Corsican now speaks with almost alarming faintness, "This pistol's broken—and—I can stand—no more!" With that he sinks down, sitting on a neighbouring rock.

The Englishman looks at him and exclaims, "Hit in the leg? Eh! I'm glad it's no worse, and if I come back from Egypt and you insist——"

But he says no more, for now a stream of fire shoots out of the smoke that hangs about the distant ship and the sound of her farewell gun comes over the water.

The lieutenant springs to the boat, crying, with an anxious voice, "Five guineas, men, when you're alongside of that ship! If we miss her, it's our ruin and disgrace!"

The Corsican fishermen bend to their oars, as he shakes the British gold in their faces with one hand, and steers with the other, while his second throws off his coat and takes an extra oar as the boat darts from the land to cut off the steamer, whose propeller is already moving.

CHAPTER IV.

DEAD!

The extreme faintness of Paoli's voice had caught Barnes' attention the moment that he spoke; it was in such noticeable contrast to its power immediately before the duel. He springs to him and feels his pulse; for, with a physician's instinct, he knows but one thing could produce so marked a change in so short a time. As he does so, his colour becomes as pale as that of the young Corsican himself, who now reclines against the cliff at his back, and whose head droops as if he had no longer the strength to hold it upright.

In an instant Barnes with his knife has cut away from his patient's leg the blue naval trousers that have already become a deep crimson purple about the wound, which is nearly as high up as the young man's hip. Using his finger as a probe he traces the bullet. As he feels its path he mutters to himself a low curse, and at the same time is conscious of thinking with what supreme will this man must have hated to have stood, for even a short minute, waiting for the hope of a second shot, when the first had done him such an injury. For a moment he cannot understand how the bullet has taken its peculiar course; but, as he sees the mutilated pistol that lies by the man's side, he comprehends what has produced the extraordinary wound he has discovered.

"Quick!" he cries to old Mateo; "bring me the strongest spirits—brandy, rum, any-

thing you have—also some water! Move like lightning!" Then he folds his coat and makes a pillow for the young Corsican's head, lays him gently on his back, and whispers to him tenderly, "Do you have any pain? Don't exert yourself to speak aloud, my ears are good!" Receiving the boy's answer, he rises and comes to de Belloc, who has been looking on with some interest at Barnes' quick movements, and taking him aside, says hurriedly but decidedly, "I am a surgeon in all but a diploma, which I did not care to take," for he wishes the soldier to know that what he is about to tell him is as absolute truth as if it came from some celebrated physician.

"Then you can tell me which way will be the best to move him to the city—by boat or by carriage?"

"By neither—he must stay here!"

"Stay here? Till when?"

"Till all is over!"

The military man stares in unbelief at the civilian, and says shortly, "Pish! He's not going to die. I've seen hundreds wounded in the same place get well!"

"But not *so* wounded! Don't look incredulous. Do I look as if *I* doubted?" and there are tears in Barnes' eyes, and in his voice too now, for that matter.

And the grim soldier, who is better in the field than in the hospital, gazes at him and knows that his companion believes with all his heart what he says with his tongue.

"But his wound is in the leg," still dissents de Belloc, who won't believe, if possible to doubt.

"The ball entered his leg; but Antonio had fired a little the first, and his pistol being lowered, the bullet struck the barrel and glanced up into his body, coursing along the external iliac artery, and tearing it to pieces. On my honour as a man *he'll bleed to death!*—perhaps in five minutes!"

"And you can do nothing?"

"Even with instruments I could not save him—the artery is so destroyed! Now will you tell him, or shall I?"

"You," said de Belloc, "for I might have received the Englishman's apology, and this would not have happened. I feel as if his death was upon me!" He goes sadly to the boy, upon whose forehead death has already placed his hand and made it white, and kisses him, and says "Farewell!" then turns away and looks out on the water, though he can hardly see—for the moment his eyes are dim with sorrow.

Kicking the pistol away with his foot, Barnes places himself beside the now almost helpless sufferer, takes his head upon his lap, moistens his forehead with the spirits Mateo has brought, and pours water down his throat, for the boy complains of thirst. Then bending down to him, he whispers that he is to die.

And the dying murmurs back to him, "I have guessed that I would not live ever since his bullet struck me. That was the reason I tried to stand up for another shot—I wished to kill him, that he might pass away with me, and I might leave no vengeance to my sister and my kin—but it always comes to us—in the third generation."

"What comes?" whispers Barnes, half recollecting the words of Marina.

"*The Vendetta!* I have left my sister one!" and then he sighs, and after a gasp or two continues—"I had sooner she forgot me than that the memory of my death destroyed her life." His words are very faint now. The American suddenly thinks if he can perhaps compress and hold the artery with his hand so as to partially stop the fearful flow of blood, he may keep life in him till his sister comes. But as he stoops down to do so, there is a noise of horses, and of people dismounting in haste, and the sound of a voice in the distance, curiously like the one murmuring in his ear, now that it is subdued and sad.

Whether in our last moment upon earth some occult power from the world we are to enter comes to us and gives us the faculty to see and know things that in the flesh would not be possible, cannot be known, for none return to tell us; but as Barnes *hears*, the dying boy seems to *see* through the cliffs of solid rock and the white walls of the little inn and the orange grove that stands between him and the one he loves, for he murmurs, "My sister!—She is there—I see her!"—and he talks to himself, describing her dress, and kisses her flowers and smiles, and then struggling to his feet gives one last and great cry of welcome—"MARINA!" and falls backward on the beach.

And from behind the inn comes her voice in happy return, "Antonio! My brother! I am here!" but as she speaks death comes and takes the boy, leaving the smile of welcome on his face.

De Belloc with a hoarse voice, after a muttered prayer or curse, says—"My God! It is his sister!" and takes up the pistol to

hide it from her. As he does so, she comes on the balcony above, turns with a little laugh to Danella and Tomasso who follow her, crying merrily, "He is here!—you heard his voice!" while she looks eagerly about for him.

From the place where Marina stands she cannot see the body on the beach below, for a projecting ledge of rocks; and Barnes—hardly knowing what he does—covers with his handkerchief the face of her dead brother. But as he does so she sees the American's head, and recognising, waves her hand gaily to him, then laughs and calls to him, "He's down there, I suppose!" and running to the stairs, in that moment of joy, forgetful of the fatigue of her long night and morning ride, she comes down, to view the sight the passions of men have prepared for her.

As she descends, there is no brighter or fairer picture than this girl. The gay colours of her dress—for she now wears the native costume of her country—embellish and develop the lithe grace and agile beauty of her form. Her face is flushed with expectation, and though anxious, there is in her eyes a flash of hope and love that make them scintillate with happiness.

She is utterly unconscious of what is before her, for she laughs again, and says, "Your note frightened us; but I've heard his voice—so he must be well—where is he?—My brother?"

Neither of the men attempt to answer her. The captain still looks at the sea, playing unconsciously with the broken pistol he has taken in his hand. The American forces himself to turn to her. As he looks she sees for the first time the silent form upon the shingle, and gazing at it for a moment she begins to pant and gasp, for she knows the uniform her brother wears.

"Who is he?—What is that? Can you not speak?" Unable to bear the suspense she takes a step towards the figure, and says, "Let me see!" Then cries, "Holy Virgin! You are afraid?"—for Barnes' hand in pity is put out to stop her. But struggling with him, she pulls away the handkerchief, and sees her dead brother's face.

Barnes had hoped that she would faint, but at first she does not seem to understand, and cries, "He called to me—Marina! a cry of welcome! This cannot be!" Then stooping down she whispers his name; falls upon his face and kisses it, and fondles it as brutes do their dead young, thinking to pet them back to life. When she sees he does not answer or return her caresses, her hand goes straight to his heart and feels for the life that is gone—and then she gives a long gasping moan of agony, for at last she believes—and slowly says, "You have brought me here—for *this?*" and shudders, and covers her face with her hands, and sways, and is about to fall. But suddenly another thought comes to her. She becomes a different being; her eyes begin to flash and scintillate; she stands erect again, and cries, "Show me who has killed him!" and, seeing the Frenchman standing, with the broken pistol in his hand, "Ah! it was you!" and comes towards him with a look in her eyes that makes him shudder.

André de Belloc, in his time, has faced many a deadly fire, and seen many a desperate deed done, both in coolness and in anger, but he turns pale as he sees the insanity of rage that glitters in the girl's face, though he simply answers, "No," and she believes him, and asks, "Who has done this thing? You dared not tell me of my brother's death! Tell me who has killed him!"

De Belloc, pointing to the water, says, "An officer on that ship, now leaving Corsica."

Barnes follows his hand, and sees the English gunboat has taken up the men who pursued it, and is now well under weigh down the harbour.

The girl's eyes rest upon the man-of-war, that is now fast putting its hull below the horizon, and linger upon it as if she would draw the great ship back to her by the very power of her will. Then she suddenly cries, "The flag is English! I shall find him! I will repay! I am a Corsican!" and begins to mutter wildly to herself.

Musso Danella and old Tomasso, who have stood behind her while she is doing this, for the affair has lasted but a minute, look gloomily at her; perhaps a slight smile of some cherished hope lighting Danella's face as he gazes at her loveliness, for the girl is even more beautiful in her passion than she was before.

Then she speaks aloud again—and now looks like the priestess of some heathen shrine that savages have dedicated to the god of Hate—"No one shall reproach me with letting my brother's murderer live! No one shall say the *Rimbecco* to me! I will avenge, for I have sworn a *Vendetta!*"

At this the old Corsican, her foster-father, kneeling reverently at her feet, says, in his hate, "*Responde!*"

And the girl, looking down at the old man, sees her brother's corpse, and moans, "It will not bring him back to me!" and cries, "Antonio!" with a scream that cannot be described, then sinks senseless as her brother, upon whose clay she falls.

* * * *

A few weeks afterwards the English gunboat *Vulture* took part in the bombardment of Alexandria, and under the Egyptian guns lost some officers and men.

BOOK II.

AN EPISODE OF THE PARIS SALON.

CHAPTER V.

A CURIOUS PICTURE.

THE Paris *Salon* of the year succeeding the one made memorable by the occupation of Egypt by the British forces, was a fair average of those brilliant displays of art that annually attract so many who pretend to or do really admire the modern French school of painting and sculpture. Nearly everybody that was in Paris at the time, visited it; and as Paris was very full of people one morning early in the May of that year, the exhibition had more than the usual heterogeneous mass of cosmopolites who come from the four quarters of the globe to worship at the shrine of pleasure in that gay capital of the modern world.

In one of the larger rooms of the *Salon* a mass of people are striving to see one of the pictures of the season. French, English, Italians, Americans, Austrians, Germans, nearly every nationality of the world are grouped together in the crowd, whilst from its depths pours out a confused variety of tongues, accents, dialects, and languages that, massed together, make a lunacy of idea and babel of sound.

"*Magnifique!*"

"Disappointing!"

"*Splendida!*"

"It will get a medal!"

"*Ich halte nicht viel davon!*"

"*Mon Dieu! Quelle foule!*"

"I prefer Gérôme!"

"This 'orrid jam is worse than Piccadilly!"

"It reminds me of 'la Cigale'!"

"Je-ru-sa-*lem!* It looks like Sally Spotts in swimming!"

This last comes from a cattle king from Kansas, who makes the remark on the edge of the crowd, but now excitedly pushes his way towards the picture; and as he has the form of a Goliath, and strength of a Sampson, Mr. Barnes, who has been most of the past year in the United States, but has run over to Europe to avoid the American summer, concludes he is a good man to do the pushing and squeezing for him, and quietly drops into his wake.

"Cracky! It *is* Sally Spotts!" repeats the Westerner.

And he is right; the belle of an Ohio village has wandered to Paris and is now as celebrated for her beauty, though not, alas, for her virtue, in this capital of nations, as she once was as Sally Spotts in her rural American home. Her old father and mother mourn her as dead, and are happier than if they knew that the little innocent child that knelt and prayed with them each night, before sleeping, lived as "La Belle Blackwood," that celebrity of the *demi-monde*, whose eccentricities they have read of and shuddered at, and whose beauty makes so much of the attraction of this famous picture, for which she has consented to be the model.

Stimulated by this discovery, the Western giant makes a determined attempt for a nearer view, and crushes into the crowd reckless of the effects of his monstrous extremities that are clothed in boots wrinkled into tremendous valleys and mountains of polished patent leather.

As he does so, a miserable "*Sacré!*" of anguish comes from a little Frenchman whom he crushes; a groan or two from an Italian art critic; and a "Be careful, carn't you, now!—oh Lord! my boots!" from an American dude, who, even in his agony does not forget his beloved English accent and pointed varnished gaiters.

The misfortunes of others are generally amusing to a looker-on, and Mr. Barnes rather laughs at the recklessness of his giant advance guard; but now the smile leaves his face and he glares in indignant rage at the creature whose bulk has so far

made his path, even in that crush, an easy one ; for he has just heard little subdued feminine shrieks, and a pathetic murmur in the softest English voice, "Oh ! Mrs. Vavassour ! He has trod on them again !"

"What ! twice ?" this from a rather buxom English matron beside the complaining beauty.

"Yes !—no !—O—oh ! That's the third time now ! I sha'n't be able to walk ! And—oh mercy ! the brute's torn my new dress !" this last in the voice of abject despair.

Looking a little ahead he sees what is to him the picture of the season. An English girl, whose lovely eyes beam with righteous anger, through their tears of pain, at the ruthless American vandal ; as she whispers to her companion, "I could have forgiven him the assault on my feet, but—on my dress—never !" and with that pouts a little laugh that makes Barnes think a *moue* in some women is the most beautiful thing in nature.

The girl draws a little out of the press ; and, stooping down to inspect the damage done to her toilet, assumes so graceful an attitude as she draws her skirt about her, outlining her exquisite figure, that her admirer forgets his indignation for the vandal, in his interest for the Niobe, whose tears have now passed into a smile. The position the girl takes—bending down slightly so as to examine more closely the damage wrought to her costume, as she raises her skirts a little for examination, displaying a perfect foot admirably booted—permits Mr. Barnes to take a long and strong glance at her, without her seeing the interest with which she is regarded. The lady with her is also studying the dress, which gives him an opportunity for inspection without appearing impertinent, of which he takes full advantage ; consequently when the young lady raises her eyes again to the general world, she has been as well looked over and criticised as any picture in the room ; and, if Barnes were the committee, would receive the gold medal of the year. She is about twenty—this he guesses—and is one of those most lovely things in the world—a thoroughly pretty, refined and gentle English girl,—there is no guess about the last.

Her head is beautified by a great mass of golden hair, that is natural in both colour and substance ; underneath this is a grand pair of honest blue eyes that are generally quite soft to those she loves ; but, when she chooses, can flash on those she hates, or shine very coldly on those she despises. Her whole face, though by no means frivolous, has enough piquant levity about it to show that her life so far has been thoroughly happy, and therefore thoroughly good.

Her face has no traces of past passion—but immense possibilities for future love. At present she is a beautiful girl—not simple enough to think there isn't plenty of sin and evil in the world, but too pure not to despise what portion of it is thrust before her.

While inspecting her, Barnes finds himself wondering if the girl has a pretty name—the next instant he hears it.

"Enid," says the elder lady, "is the disaster to your dress bad enough to make you return to the hotel ?"

"No-o," (reflectively) "only a gather gone ; and in the hundred this gown has, one won't be missed ! Besides, I want to show you that curious picture ; and to-day is my last chance !"

"That isn't the one, I hope ?" says her companion.

"No ! I detest such paintings, and the publicity they give a certain class of women like 'La Belle Blackwood' !"

"Oh, Enid ! you shouldn't talk of such people," says the matron.

"Why not ? they exist, don't they ? I'm not blind—I have ears. I can't ignore that picture, and say it isn't there against that wall ; but though I may not admire the art that stoops to dignify such women and make heroines of them, I can't say I despise the woman in the picture so much as I do that man there who is talking about her !" She indicates, by her glance, the Cattle King, who is eagerly asking the address of "La Belle Blackwood," and telling the man nearest to him "That he'll look her up ; he's an old friend of her family's, he is—and he'll spend the price of a thousand steers to give her a high time—he's in Paris for pleasure, he is ; this is his week off ; Mrs. Ruggles is in London !"

Barnes knows that queen of the demi-monde, and as he hears the English girl's remark he feels ashamed of himself. But he feels much more ashamed, a moment after, when the cattle magnate, who has found his French rather unintelligible to those near him, turns round and recognizing him, cries out in English, "Hello, Barnes, of New York ! You know everyone that's wicked in Paris. Tell me the address of 'La Belle Blackwood' !"

For a moment Barnes has a surging in his ears, as the blood rushes to his face, and he thinks he catches from the English matron the words "Depraved wretch!" not made much more palatable to him by the girl's "Who would have believed it from his face!"

But summoning up desperate assurance, he replies nonchalantly, "Everyone knows that who lives in Paris; it's 42 Rue du Helder. You'd know it too, if you could read French, Ruggles. I saw it in this morning's *Figaro!*"

"Ah! much obliged," says Ruggles. "You young bloods are always a leetle ahead of us old boys!" He gives him a leer (for which Barnes could have killed him), and jots down the address.

If mental curses could destroy, the Cattle King would have a stroke of paralysis on the spot, for the would-be innocent Barnes sends him to the lower regions under his breath with a vigour and earnestness that would settle a much tougher subject, as he reflects on the probable pleasing effect this little passage may produce on the young lady's opinion and reception of him when she first meets and knows him, as he has now firmly made up his mind she shall do. "Egad, I'm glad I've given the beggar the right address," he thinks to himself savagely. "If 'La Belle Blackwood' gets her clutches on the old fool she will avenge me!"

He does not dare to turn round and look at the girl, but has an idea that she is trying to see if he has a very wicked and depraved face behind the back of his blushing neck. This idea becomes a certainty as he hears the British matron say to her, "Enid, don't look at that modern Faust any longer!"

A moment after she is addressed as Miss Anstruther by a gentleman who stops to speak to the two ladies.

"I knew she had a pretty name," thinks Barnes, for he had been putting two and two together, and the two and two in this case produce Enid Anstruther.

He moreover catches her saying to the gentleman something about meeting "Dear Edwin" in Nice. "Dear Edwin" makes him meditate. "It must be the chap she's engaged to," is the unpleasant thought that comes to him. "She's too nice a girl not to have half England running after her." In any other case he would not have made this mistake; and would know that the last man a girl of her type would call publicly "dear" would be the man she loved; that "Dear Edwin" might be a friend, cousin, brother—but lover—never! But philosophy has left Barnes; for the first time in his life he has become temporarily insane—for he is now in love!

Common courtesy forbids him to linger longer so close to Miss Anstruther, for her bright eyes are beginning to notice his glances; so he moves a little away, making sure that he is in the path the ladies are taking—but in advance of them, so that apparently they are following him—not he them.

To do this effectively he has to perform a good amount of scientific skipping and hopping about, for the ladies seem to have but little time to spend in the place, and fly from one picture to another, as birds do from cherry to cherry.

Barnes fears this will attract the young lady's attention, and is delighted when she points to a smaller apartment, saying, "There's the room of the curious picture. When I have explained why it is curious to me, I'll take you to it."

Knowing that he will meet the girl there in a few minutes again, by apparent accident, the American promptly enters the room of the curious painting, suddenly gives an exclamation of astonishment, and stands petrified—for almost in front of him is a picture of the duel on the beach at Ajaccio, as vividly true and cruelly life-like as on that fatal morning a year before.

CHAPTER VI.

PURSUED.

THE incidents peculiar to that event in Corsica had by no means left the mind of the American, but in the life of the world of to-day, with its railroad rapidity of change and incident, and extraordinary variety in idea and action, a man of the present generation has little time to think of the past, he can only put it away in some closet of the brain, to be produced for future reference when called for.

Barnes, face to face with the picture, produces his memories of Corsica, and proceeds to apply them to the subject before him.

His first impression is one of surprise that the view in front of him is so wonderfully correct in some details, and so false in others. The picture is a complete representation of the scene. The shelving shore, the blue waters of the bay, the boat with its native fishermen waiting for the English officers, the little inn with its balcony and table set with the remains of Barnes' breakfast, the decayed wooden stairs, and the Corsican mountains in the background, are so absolutely real that he almost feels himself standing upon the beach again. But the figures and grouping are not all so correct.

The canvas presents two portions of the action of the duel that occurred at two different times. Either with the object of giving greater effect to the picture as a work of art, or for some other unknown reason, these two episodes are placed together as if they had taken place at the same moment.

At the left of the scene is young Paoli in his French naval uniform, dying in Barnes' arms, who is supporting his head in the same manner as Marina first saw him — his hand is upraised, however, pointing to the English lieutenant with a gesture of disapprobation. At the centre stands de Belloc, sternly looking at the British officer with a glance of surprised horror, while upon the stairway is old Mateo, gazing at him with a scowl of repulsion. This object of general condemnation, standing rather to the right of the picture, is holding in one hand his ship's pistol, apparently just discharged, as it is still smoking; while in the other, upraised, he grasps the lucky crown piece with Paoli's bullet flattened against it, and looks at it with triumphant exultation and joy. This effect is also duplicated in the figure of the Englishman's second, who seems equally elated at his companion's success.

The figures of Paoli, de Belloc, old Mateo, and even the two Corsican fishermen who row the waiting boat, are all absolutely correct in every detail. In fact, that of Antonio is painted with a care and delicacy, and his face given an ideal beauty of expression that makes him look more like a martyred saint than a man dying with the desire of another's blood upon his soul, proving that whoever painted the picture could only regard him as absolutely unsinning in the affair that caused his death. In marked contrast to this, Mr. Barnes' face is by no means a good likeness, and could only have been painted from a passing memory; while the figures of the two English sailors, that are entirely ideal, must have been produced by one who had never seen them, and at best had had but a description of their persons and appearance. The artist, furthermore, had evidently been disposed to do them little justice, as the countenance of the principal in the affair, though lighted up by triumph, is darkened and shaded by malice, murder, and cowardice in vivid, yet most repulsive combination.

Over this scene is thrown the rising tropic sun, giving the brilliant lights and shadows of a southern picture, and developing the passions on the faces of the men till the thing seems no work of the imagination, but a horrible and cruel reality.

As an artistic production the picture is not great; for it is evidently the work of an artist who is not thoroughly cultured in his style, nor technic; but as a concentration of human passions, real and awful in their intensity, it makes its mark. It has been hung pretty near the line, and has quite often a little crowd of morbid gazers about it. Its effects are heightened by artificial means, as it is deeply framed in dead black, lustreless ebony; and has in red letters upon its sombre frame, its title, "*Murdered!*"

If the committee are idealists, it will

receive no prize, thinks Mr. Barnes; but if a majority of them are realists in art, it will certainly gain an honourable mention, perhaps more. "Anyway, Marina might have made me better looking," thinks the young man, for he has almost immediately determined from whose brush the picture must have come. Everything the young Corsican girl knew accurately of the affair had been accurately painted. The portrait of Barnes, of whom she had but a memory, was defective; while the faces of the two English officers she had never seen were entirely creations of her imagination. Thinking this, he looks at the corner of the picture to see the artist's name; but only finds the inscription, "*Finem Respice!*" which Mr. Barnes, whose knowledge of Latin is already rusty, copies into his pocket-book, and a few days after discovers means, "Look to the End!"

At Barnes' first exclamation and start of surprise at the picture, an old man some little distance in the background, but still near enough to notice anyone standing before it, has gradually approached; and while he has been examining the painting has carefully been scrutinizing him. Now as he turns about to see if the English girl has not yet entered the room, this man, who has the appearance of a picture dealer, and many of the general attributes of the speculator who loves art for the shekels that it brings, drops alongside of him and says impressively in English, with a slight foreign accent—"Horrible!"

"Horrible, indeed!" returns Barnes with almost a shudder, for the picture is so vivid that he feels the dying boy again in his arms.

His emotion seems to excite the curiosity of the man beside him as he suggests, "Monsieur is interested in the picture?"

"Very much!"

"Indeed?" (a slight inquiry on the word). "It is not a great work; the artist is young, I believe!"

"You know her then!"

"*Her?*" the man looks confused, but after a moment suddenly says, "Yes! I've seen her once; you see I thought if I could get the thing cheap I'd buy it. It's so beastly horrible. Some people are morbid in their tastes, and will pay more for a first-class murder than for a masterpiece from the brush of Gérôme or Detaille, —I am an art dealer!"

"So I guessed!" replies Barnes. "I suppose if Meissonier would deify some brutal modern assassination by his genius, you'd give a good deal for it!"

"A fortune!—if he'd but embody a crime I once investigated——" Here the man checks himself suddenly and says, "You wish to purchase this, Monsieur?"

"No! I wouldn't have it for a gift! It brings back unpleasant memories too vividly; I almost see it now!" and the American again thinks of the fatal morning, and becomes grave.

The man at this is evidently about to ask him some question, but Enid Anstruther and Mrs. Vavassour enter the room, and Barnes has now no thought of anything but her. He moves away from the picture and ensconces himself in an obscure corner where he can see the girl without coming himself prominently into view. From this time forward, however, the gaze of the man who has spoken to him follows him greedily, as if there was a good deal of money in not losing sight of the foreigner who is interested in the picture. A moment later, seeing that Barnes has no thought of leaving, he steps out of the room and returns with two others, who, after a short consultation, put their eyes upon and keep them on the foreigner who has been startled by the picture; seemingly to fix him in their minds, and after a moment saunter leisurely out unnoticed by Barnes, who has just been reduced to practical lunacy by the peculiar actions of his English enchantress.

Miss Anstruther, after one quick glance about the room with her shining blue eyes, apparently in search of somebody she does not see, leads Mrs. Vavassour straight to the canvas from which Barnes has turned away; and standing before it laughs to her companion and says, "That's the one I told you about! That's he! That's the man I've fallen in love with! That's the creature I adore with all my heart!" pointing eagerly to the picture.

"Which one, Miss Impressionable?" laughs Mrs. Vavassour, feeling for her glasses.

"That one! The ugly one!" and the girl directs her finger straight at the figure and face intended for Barnes.

At these astounding words a spasm of ecstasy flies through that young gentleman's soul. After recovering his senses a little, he meditates savagely: if Marina had only painted him a little better looking, the girl would recognize him, and then—rapture!

This flattering view of the situation is materially tempered, however, as he hears Mrs. Vavassour remark, inspecting the picture closely with her eye-glass, "Why! he somewhat resembles that horrid modern young Faust we saw in the other room!"

"Not at all. My darling"—the girl lingers on the word and gazes coquettishly at the Barnes on canvas—"is much handsomer. Say you think so, Mrs. Vavassour, or I shan't like you!"

"Indeed, he is not!"

"Oh, yes, he is! He has such an exquisite moustache, and Faust has none."

Barnes here curses the barber who shaved him and robbed him of the ornament.

After a little pause, Mrs. Vavassour, who is a practical woman, says, "What nonsense! You have plenty of flesh-and-blood adorers, Enid!"

The reply made Barnes start.

"Oh! he's flesh and blood too; this is not an ideal, *it's a portrait!*"

"Why do you think that?"

"You know I told you what at first made me so interested in the picture—that letter from Egypt. It rather reminded me of the affair, especially that lucky penny episode on the canvas; so I came to see the picture several times, and got to study the morbid horror of the thing, and then became interested in the faces—especially in *his*—but I wasn't very desperate about him till I became jealous."

"What?" gasps Mrs. Vavassour.

"I feared I had a rival!" this last with simulated melodramatic intensity.

"A rival?" almost screams the now astounded British matron. "Great Heavens! Did you think that canvas thing could be false to you?"

"No! But I feared another one loved him also; a Spanish-Italian foreign girl used to linger at a little distance, gazing lovingly at this part of the picture," and she points to Barnes supporting the dying boy. "A Frenchman generally was with her; and one day—I presume she had noticed my interest in the picture—she came to me and asked me point blank why I looked at that canvas so much? As I did not care to tell her the Egyptian story, I said I was *épris* with the face of the man who pitied! And then she said to me with a little sad smile, 'Yes, he pitied—but be careful, don't love him too much, he lives!' To which I replied, 'You had better take care of your own heart—you look at him quite tenderly yourself——'"

"And she?" suggests Mrs. Vavassour.

"She said, 'It is the dying man I look at—he was my brother!' Then she went away, and I found out, by questioning the attendants, that she had painted the picture of her brother's murder—a nice, morose, morbid taste, wasn't it?"

"Not a bit more morbid than giving your heart to a man on canvas," suggests Mrs. Vavassour.

"Do you think so? I find it very convenient. I can have a rendezvous with him whenever I please; and he never makes love to me in return, nor says things that make me hate him, nor squeezes my hand till my fingers suffer, nor does something that causes me to get on my dignity and keep him at a distance; but as this is our last interview, I've brought you with me, Mrs. Vavassour, that our parting may not be too tender!" laughs the girl.

"Enid! you're not insane enough to ever expect to meet this man!"

"No such luck, I'm afraid," says the girl in playful sadness.

"And if you did?"

"And he looks like that I should adore him! The rest"—and she points to the picture—"have triumph, hate, or rage in their faces—but pity, none! My darling," here the girl almost laughs at her conceit, "has pity. I know he could fight as well as the bravest of them; and love—much better!" and she gives the Mr. Barnes on the canvas a look of such bewitching tenderness, that she makes the Barnes of flesh and blood almost crazy with rapture.

Mr. Barnes has not overheard the whole of this conversation, but he has caught enough to make him slightly imbecile, and he now has wild dreams of introducing himself as the earthly representative of the being she loves. However, a little remaining sanity prevents this impertinence.

"But if you meet him would you marry him?" asks Mrs. Vavassour, who now with true matronly spirit has become interested in making a match for the girl, even with a man on canvas.

"Who can tell? We seldom marry first loves—what nonsense! Of course we'll never see each other; and, if we did, I should probably hate him!" Then turning to the picture, Miss Anstruther says: "Good-bye, my darling; if I were rich I'd buy you, and we'd never part;

but poverty so often separates lovers in this world."

Barnes, who drinks in with extended ears the last part of the speech, rushes off to find the picture-dealer. He will purchase it and astound his darling, his Enid, by presenting it on the wedding morning, is his last erratic inspiration.

He has got to calling her "his Enid!" in his mind already, has this rapid young man—for though, during the extraordinary conversation he has just listened to, he has probably not had one moment of real, absolute sanity, he has still clung, with all a maniac's fervour, to one grand central idea, and that is, that the girl who loves the Barnes of canvas, shall love the Barnes of clay, and marry him with very short delay, for either consideration or trousseau.

In fact he has, even now, wild dreams of Como and the honeymoon, with *her* by his side, robed in delicious morning gowns, and other entrancing toilets that drive young husbands into rapture. Wonders whether she'll give him one night a week off for his club, and if she'll make a very big battle against cigarettes, cigars, and other pet mannish frivolities and dissipations. And many other wild masculine ideas flit through his brain, some of which would make her laugh, and some of which would probably make her blush, if the girl could have known them.

Mr. Barnes finds the picture-dealer without much trouble—for that worthy has never lost sight of him for a moment, and comes eagerly half way to meet him—"I haven't a minute to talk to you," says the American, "I've changed my mind and want that picture. Find out what price she asks for it, and communicate with me at Hotel Meurice."

"What name?" inquires the picture-dealer—but by this time Barnes is half way across the room from him, in pursuit of Miss Anstruther, who has just left the apartment.

He shouts back "Hotel Meurice! I'll leave word for you at the office!" hurries on, and pushing his way in the crowd, overtakes the ladies just as they reach the vestibule. Here he catches these words passing between them:

"Enid, you must have some lunch before you go!"

"I can't! I must catch the express train. Lady Chartris goes by it, and my maid will be with her." With this the young girl steps into a hack and drives away. As she does so, Barnes gets into another, whispering to the driver, "Twenty francs if you don't lose sight of that carriage ahead of you! And drive like blazes!" As the American whirls away, the picture-dealer, accompanied by two men with whom he has been in consultation, comes out of the door; he says to them, "Remember—don't let him escape you—follow him and telegraph!"

The men jump hastily into a hack that has been waiting for them, and the three cabs take the direction of the Boulevard Manzas and Lyons Railway station,—the young English girl in the first, unconscious of pursuit; Mr. Barnes in the second, equally innocent that anyone is on his track; and two very ordinary-looking Frenchmen in the third; one of them chuckling to the other, "I wonder what frightened our bird! That was a bright card he played, telling Casper to find him at the Hotel Meurice, when he's now driving like mad to the Lyons Railway station!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE LYONS EXPRESS.

As Miss Anstruther drives up to the Lyons station, she sees that the train is almost ready to move, and having her ticket in her pocket, and no time to find her party, she steps into a first-class carriage, the door of which a guard obligingly holds open for her. Mr. Barnes, however, doesn't know exactly for what place he wants his ticket; but remembering hearing the young lady say she hoped to meet

"Dear Edwin" in Nice, promptly guesses in answer to the booking-clerk's question—"Nice!" At this the two men following after him at the booking-office say Nice also, and they all hurry to the train. Having not a moment to lose, Barnes jumps into the only carriage now open, and finds himself sitting in the very place he most desired—that is, opposite the girl he pursues. The two men get into the coupé compartment behind.

The American's back is towards the engine, consequently, looking through the windows of the carriage, he has a view of the rear of the train; and just as they begin to move he has a rather ludicrous flying glimpse of a conventional English matron, dressed in the height of fashion, struggling with three sturdy English children and two French railway officials in a vain endeavour to catch the out-going train. She is supported in this by two serving-maids and a conventional English flunkey, all laden down with the hand-baggage, without which a conventional English family never travels.

The next second the struggling party are left well behind by the train that is now under full headway for Lyons! Mr. Barnes, who is a perfect "*Baedeker*," having travelled over Europe many times, knows it is an express, and will only make four stops of any length between Paris and the silk-weaving city; at Montereau, Tonnerre, Dijon, and Macon; any other pauses will be but for a second or so. Therefore he has little chance of losing his pleasant companion for nearly two hours; perhaps not then, if he arranges the matter properly.

He settles himself in his seat and begins to contemplate the tasks he has set himself to do, which are, first, to make the young lady's acquaintance who sits before him: second, to gain her love. He is sure he knows none of her circle to formally introduce him; and wisely judges that she will by no means permit him to introduce himself, as on his entering the carriage she has drawn herself up, given him a glance of the coldest unmeaning, and now doesn't let her eyes wander from a newspaper she has with her. Until he conquers the first problem, it is manifestly absurd to contemplate the second; so he immediately directs his mind to discover some means of creating an acquaintance, without either wounding her sensitive pride or outraging any of the proprieties of usage or decorum of the class in life to which Miss Anstruther evidently belongs.

While doing so, he cannot keep from contemplating the wonderful physical beauty of the girl before him, which, until now, he has not thoroughly realized.

The girl is but little over the medium height, but, so erect, she looks much taller. Her figure is a perfect combination of the round contours of the woman and the lithe and subtile graces of the girl, her limbs having that agile ease of movement that makes their motion harmonious; their rest, unconscious beauty. All this is easily apparent, for she has been clothed by an artist who has felt that art could do nothing for such a figure, but simply display it; and her dress, without any undue trimming or furbelow, is a perfect fit. Its colour is blue, of medium shade, relieved by a little white at neck and wrists, and a handful of pink rosebuds carelessly pinned on her bosom. The general effect of this toilet is simplicity, perfect in detail, from her boots and gloves to her jewellery, which is limited in amount, bnt exquisite in design, from the massive gold bracelet that encloses her supple wrist to the little watch she occasionally consults.

Under a hat, not large enough to conceal the form of her head, is a heavy mass of lustrous golden hair, with now and then a dash of brown auburn showing in it, which shades something a poet would have called a poem, a painter would have styled a picture; but Barnes knows it is the fairest thing in nature, for it is the face of the girl he loves. And as that thought comes thoroughly home to him, he thanks God, as he has never thanked Him before, that he is rich, and has leisure, and can pursue her to the ends of the earth, if necessary, to make her his own.

As a poor man, he would have been tied to some drudgery of life for daily bread, and so have lost her; but now he has his chance, nothing can rob him of that, and he laughs to himself as he thinks that fanatics have told us that "contentment is better than wealth;" forgetting that it takes a philosopher to be content with poverty, though a man can sometimes be satisfied with riches.

As to the character of the young lady before him, Barnes has a vague idea that it is perfect; but he is by this time so partial to her that a blemish would be twisted by his amorous mind into a beauty, and he does not notice that there is a general impulsiveness of manner about her that would make a careful observer guess that Miss Anstruther might carry a generous

impulse too far, and has a spirit that is apt to fly to arms before even the bugle sounds the alarm, to do battle for ideas upon which she forms opinions without very deep consideration, but with intense and determined conviction.

At present Mr. Barnes notices that his angel has a discontented expression on her face, and is tapping the floor of the car very impatiently with her seraphic foot. With a lover's faint-heartedness he imagines she is angry at his intrusion upon her privacy.

This is partly true. The presence of any man would annoy any girl at such a moment, for Miss Anstruther's foot is asleep, and she would like to be alone, so that she might kick it about, stamp on it, dance upon it, and drive the needles and pins out of it, unembarrassed by masculine observation. After a little, gentler measures apparently succeed; a peaceful lassitude comes over her face, and she peruses the paper in quiet once more.

Silence! If he only dared to break it by addressing her. But a too vital result hangs upon her reception of his advances. To any other girl Barnes would have spoken with the nonchalant assurance of the man of the world, making an advance that could by no means offend, and, if not pleasantly received, could be retreated from with easy grace.

But with her it seems so different. A slight offence might destroy his chances of success, and he slyly studies the girl to see if there is no weak spot in the defensive armour of hauteur she has put about her. While he watches, she reads the newspaper, and the train, hardly stopping, slips past Melun, and one or two little stations, without her making a movement. She apparently finishes the paper, and, putting it down, takes from her satchel a novel. This she begins to read, getting more and more interested, and her face reflecting the passions and emotions of the book. Barnes can see it is one of Ouida's, and hardly thinks it is just the thing for his divinity to peruse; for, though Barnes enjoys Ouida himself, like many other men, he prefers to have all the wickedness in his family—and he almost now regards the girl in that light—concentrated in himself. He at last sees the title, and is relieved. It is "Two Little Wooden Shoes," perhaps the most pathetic story ever written, containing no wickedness, nothing but tears. Some of these have got into the girl's eyes, and add to her loveliness as the train stops at Montereau. Here Barnes fears she is going to leave him, but she is so interested in the novel, she merely looks up, calls the guard to her, and says, "Find Lady Chartris, who is on this train, and tell her Miss Anstruther will join her at the next station," then buries herself in the book once more. As the guard goes away, Barnes blesses the genius of Ouida, that has given him a little more time. The train rushes on, and, after finishing the story, and wiping the tears from her eyes with the back of her hand unconsciously, the girl looks out of the carriage window at the passing scenery. But no one can commune with average French views for more than a quarter of an hour at a time. She turns from the window with a little pathetic half yawn, half sigh, tosses away her hat, which exposes a few new beauties, and tries to find a spot in the cushion that is softer than her cheek, that she may rest it against it and go to sleep.

Her expression becomes dreamy and contemplative; she looks quietly at Barnes, and, after a little, her eyes have a slight smile of recognition in them, which makes the young man hope she is discovering that he is the Barnes of the canvas. She is really remembering him as Mrs. Vavassour's dissipated modern young Faust, of the "La Belle Blackwood" episode, and her glance becomes a trifle sterner.

Barnes surreptitiously consults his watch. It is after two o'clock. He must act now or never. At this moment a sudden thought seems to come to Miss Anstruther. She rouses into activity, opens her eyes wider, with a little smile, as if metaphorically patting herself on the back for a bright idea, sits erect in the seat, picks up her paper again—which is the *Figaro* of the morning—and studies it carefully, going over it line by line and column by column, not even omitting the advertisements. She is not exactly reading the journal, but apparently earnestly seeking for some one item of news in the edition before her.

"What the deuce is she after now?" wonders the American; "shall I offer to help her find it?" It is just as well that he does not, for by this time she has finished the paper, and her eyes have a severely moral expression in them, though she gives a slight laugh and a veiled glance at Mr. Barnes.

"By George! she *is* recognising me as her darling of the canvas," thinks that gentleman, in rapture.

In reality Miss Anstruther is thinking what an atrocious fib the modern Faust has uttered that morning in the *Salon*, where he publicly stated that he had read "La Belle Blackwood's" address in the daily *Figaro*. Having the paper at hand and wishing to kill time, it had occurred to her to examine the journal, and see if the young gentleman opposite had arrived at his rather compromising knowledge from the general source he said he had. This she has done with a result entirely disastrous to Faust's reputation for both morality and veracity.

Emboldened by his flattering view of the causes of his charmer's demeanour, the time for Tonnerre, their next stoppage, drawing near, and desperately anxious to do something to advance his cause, Barnes strives as nearly as possible to give himself the attitude of the Barnes of the picture, attempting to throw the same sorrowing pathos into his eyes. This has a fearful effect on the girl; she blushes red and is anxiously uneasy as she thinks he is slightly intoxicated. Made more confident by the evident effect he has produced, and wishing to hear the melody of her voice again—for it is now quite four hours since she last spoke in his hearing, in the *Salon*—Barnes, as she is laying down the paper, eagerly says: "Would you allow me to examine your *Figaro*, madam, I have not as yet seen this morning's edition!"

Her answer comes cold as an iceberg, and disdainful as a saint addressing a sinner, "Certainly!"

With this one word she hands him the paper with the same apparent unconcern she would have put it into a patent letter-box.

"Many thanks!" murmurs the blushing Barnes, who is suddenly conscious that his words—if she remembers him at all—have convicted him of a deliberate fib. He feels crushed and uncomfortable, buries himself behind the paper, and tries to appear to read it, though for a moment he doesn't see a line.

The girl turns from him, and looking out of the window, thinks what a deceitful wretch the creature inside is, and that her gallant sailor brother would have disdained to have told such a frightful lie. In this, however, she is mistaken; her gallant sailor brother would, under similar circumstances, have told just such a frightful lie, if he had been smart enough to think of it. But women have a way of deifying those they love, and thinking them better than other men, otherwise but few of us would have much chance of holding their respect.

As Barnes looks at her beautiful but uncompromising back, it suddenly flashes on him that, when they reach Tonnerre, the girl will join her party, and then his present chance is gone from him for ever. However, he will still follow her. He looks at his pocket-book and finds a thousand francs in bills, also his letter of credit. Finances are all right, and he can telegraph for his servant and baggage. If he is to win, he realizes now that he must adopt some settled plan of action, and begins to think of those who have conquered in love's wars before, and what assistance he can derive from their experience. He remembers that the most successful man with the fair sex he had ever known had once summed up his ideas on the subject in these words: "The woman who conquers, despises; the woman who is conquered, loves!"

Barnes determines he will conquer Miss Anstruther; but the question is, how? While he is pondering over it, the train slackens speed, and a moment after comes to a standstill, as the guard calls out "Tonnerre!"

So far Mr. Barnes has not made one step towards success; but here an unexpected stroke of luck awaits him.

The young lady, as soon as the guard opens the carriage door, says hurriedly to him in French that has but a slight accent, "Did you deliver my message to Lady Chartris? Which is her carriage!"

"I did not, Mademoiselle!"

"And why not?" Her voice is slightly imperious.

"I could not find her!"

To which the young lady replies impatiently, "Then do so at once! Lady Chartris is English. When you have found her, come back and take me to her!"

The official touches his hat and walks off, as the girl takes up her satchel, shakes her dress out and prepares to disappear from Mr. Barnes' view.

Anxious for another word before she leaves him, the American cannot restrain himself from saying, "I beg your pardon; here is your paper!" offering her the journal.

Her answer is again disappointing, "I shall not use it; please don't trouble yourself!"

The next instant the guard is again at the carriage door, and says respectfully,

"Mademoiselle, the lady you spoke of is not in the train!"

A look of consternation comes over the girl's face, but she recovers herself and exclaims, "Impossible! When you inquired, she could not have understood you. She imagines she speaks French perfectly, but your Breton accent would be entirely beyond her!"

Not relishing this reflection on his dialect the man says shortly, "I am sure she is not in this train!"

"But she must be! She has no right to be anywhere else. You did not mistake the name—Lady Chartris? She is English, and fat and fifty, and has three children; a boy in knickerbockers and two girls—one so high"—the young lady holds up her hand,—"and another, a foot shorter; and two servant-women, one of them my maid!—inquire again!" The guard disappears.

This description of Lady Chartris has given Barnes a spasm of hope, for he guesses she is the fat woman with the three children who has missed the train. This view of the matter is made certainty by the railway officer returning and announcing, "There is no woman with three children in this train!"

At this, the girl gives a little shiver of anxiety; and says, "I can't believe you. She would not dare to leave me here alone. Help me out, let me see for myself!"

As she steps from the carriage the official suggests, politely, for he rather pities her embarrassment, "I will keep this seat reserved for you, as all the other carriages are nearly full, and I am sure the lady you seek is not on the train!"

Hardly heeding his words, the girl runs off; but, while this has been going on, Barnes has been plotting how to conquer the young lady's frigidity of manner to him, and has decided on *starving her*. He has seen wild animals subdued by hunger in India; and a little hunger, he judges, will help his case with Miss Anstruther. In fact he almost chuckles to himself, "The worse off she, the better off I."

The problem before him now is, how to keep a girl, of at least average sense, and probably enough money, from getting anything to eat until she calls him to her aid. It is seven hours more to Lyons, with two stops of consequence—Dijon and Macon. He looks the guard over and imagines he has solved it.

By this time, the object of his solicitude is back again, exclaiming, "What am I to do, that fearful old woman" (she is angry and excited) "is not here! When does the train arrive at Lyons?"

"At ten-fifteen."

"How long before a return train starts for Paris?"

Barnes' heart sinks, and he gets hastily out of the carriage to return to Paris himself.

"In about three-quarters of an hour!"

She looks at her watch—it is now almost a quarter after three—and asks, "A fast train?"

"No! a local; take you there by ten to-night!"

Hesitating a moment she says, "See if there's a telegram for Miss Anstruther at the office!" and fearing he may mistake the name, gives the guard her card.

The man takes this, but returns almost instantly saying, "No telegram!"

"When does the train after this one leave Paris for Lyons?"

"At twenty minutes past twelve!"

"Why she's only an hour behind me!" joyfully cries the girl. "She will overtake me at Lyons! I shall go on!" and steps back into the carriage again.

The guard hardly catches the whole of this, another passenger has also spoken to him. Barnes knows that this twelve-twenty train is a slow accommodation that travels as if its engine was eternally stopping for repairs, and will not arrive at Lyons till late next morning. He is aware that he should now go up to Miss Anstruther, and tell her what he knows; but he is also very confident that his best chance of gaining the friendship of the girl is when she most needs a friend; and that will be in Lyons to-night. Soothing his conscience with the vile maxim that, "All is fair in love and war," he walks into the booking office and takes six extra tickets for the vacant places in his compartment; comes out, goes after the guard, and, taking care he is out of sight of Miss Anstruther, silently holds out a twenty-franc piece. That official smiles, instantly pockets it and says, "What can I do for Monsieur?"

To which Barnes promptly responds, "See that no one takes seats in my compartment. I have here the extra tickets!" showing them to the man. "A supper will meet me at Dijon; if the young lady asks to get out, to eat, either at Dijon or Macon, tell her there is no time!"

"But if she insists on getting out herself?"

"Offer to bring what she orders to her,

she is alone and will accept, then don't do it. Immediately after she indicates she is hungry, pass my supper in to me; I want Mademoiselle to accept of my hospitality!"

"Ah!" says the guard, "you are *épris* with Mademoiselle?"

"Quite!" and Barnes to prove it, produces another gold twenty-franc piece remarking, "Earn this and you will get it—at Lyons."

The man replies, "I shall call on you at Lyons!"

Barnes knows the affair is arranged, goes hurriedly into the telegraph office, and sends a telegram to a well-known restaurant at Dijon.

During this stoppage, two men have walked up and down the platform and eyed Barnes and the girl, and now one of them goes into the telegraph office after him and sends a telegram addressed to

"*Count Musso Danella, Paris.*"

Mr. Barnes hurries out of the office, and catches the train, that is now about to proceed. As he enters the carriage, the English girl, noticing the wild triumph of his glance, thinks with a shudder, "He surely must be a little drunk," and so he is,—drunk with happiness—for he now feels that he's got his angel to himself for at least six short hours.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONQUERED!

THIS curious conceit of the girl affects her manner towards him. Miss Anstruther is now an iceberg, for she knows that she is alone and unprotected.

As the American sees that any passing glance of his causes her to instantly turn her head coldly away, he thinks rather savagely, "Wonder if she supposes I am brute enough to take advantage of her loneliness and insult her! By Heaven! if any man dares to approach that angel in an unpleasant way——!" and he grinds his teeth at the thought, and then, such are the idiocies of love—he almost wishes some unlucky Frenchman would insult his divinity that he might fall upon him, beat him, bang his head against the floor, dash him out of the car-window, and generally make a hero of himself, in defence of this delicate girl that he proposes to starve into better acquaintance with his virtues.

The object of his tender regard has again picked up Ouida and is trying to turn her attention to another short story, but she apparently makes bad work of this, and is becoming anxious. She puts the book down and looks at her watch.

"Egad, she is getting impatient for something," thinks Barnes, who is beginning to study her in a grim, philosophical manner, "wonder if it's dinner!"

A moment after, Miss Anstruther looks out of the window, and keeps at this till her admirer gets impatient, for he is no longer happy unless he sees her face every minute.

However, this does not last for ever, she once more picks up her bag, produces a bundle of old letters and reads them. Perceiving they are in a masculine hand, Barnes wonders whom they are from, and hates him, whoever he is.

Then she again looks at her watch, this time petulantly, and, putting away her correspondence takes out her handkerchief, wipes the mist from the window with it, and gazes out again, but only for a moment. She is evidently nervous, plays with her bracelet, and is now quite restless; and, after another glance at her watch, she searches hurriedly in her satchel. Barnes fears it is for cake or candy, or something that women eat, and feels relieved when she takes out a pocket guide-book, and studies it, and runs up and down time-tables, and brings out a

little gold pencil, but instead of figuring with it, knits her brow, and chews abstractedly the end of it. Apparently, either not being sufficient of a mathematician, or not finding exactly what she wants, she seems about to speak to him—but suddenly checks herself and goes to tying knots in her handkerchief in a mechanical way, that makes Barnes fear that she is not hungry, but may be a female Doctor Tanner.

His alarm is shortly terminated by her voice coming to him, rather hesitatingly and nervously, but very sweetly: "Excuse me, sir, but have you travelled this route before?"

"Often," says Barnes. His voice indicates he is sober, and she gains courage.

"Do we arrive at Dijon soon?"

"In fifteen minutes, barring accidents," he replies, looking at his watch.

"The train stops there for refreshments?" this anxiously.

"Sometimes," says the American, hardly able to conceal his delight, as he knows that appetite has got the better of Miss Anstruther; then he continues, "Being alone, you had better ask the guard; he will bring you anything you may want," and considers himself quite a Machiavelli.

"I thank you very much." The girl's voice is so grateful that Barnes could bite his tongue for being such a brute; for by this time she looks quite pale and worn out. But he excuses his heartlessness by thinking how his darling will enjoy her supper when she *does* get it. And this leads to the reflection as he views the girl's impatient and hungry look, and remembers he has heard her say that she has had no lunch, that he and the guard will probably have their hands full in Dijon, for, doubtless Miss Anstruther will make a very lively and desperate fight to get something to eat during the twenty minutes she will spend in sight of the refreshment room. "We can't use force; diplomacy must be our only stand-by—it will be a close call." As he thinks this the lights of Dijon come in sight, for it is now almost evening.

The instant the train comes to a stop the English girl beckons at the window of the carriage to the guard. That worthy apparently does not see her, and opens the door of every other compartment but hers, then disappears, going towards the locomotive as if someone had called him away. After a little he returns again and passes into the telegraph office, wanders out and thinks a man calls him to another carriage, and talks to the people in it. During this about half the passengers get out and go to the refreshment-room. The sight makes the girl impatient, for now she taps violently on the window of her carriage. At last the guard sees her and comes slowly and opens the door. Barnes is delighted with him; he has already disposed of nearly ten minutes.

The young lady says sharply, for she is justly angry, "Why did you not open this door when you did the rest?"

"I was called away to the engine."

"What have you to do with the engine?"

Barnes chuckles. The girl is wasting time by asking questions, and playing his game for him.

But hunger brings her back to business, and she comes to the point with, "I want you to bring me something to eat."

"Anything to drink?"

"Of course. Tea or coffee—either."

The man hesitates, catches Barnes' eye, and still seeing twenty francs in it, says, "Certainly, Mademoiselle; there is ample time. What would you like? I will bring the bill of fare." He runs away but stays some time, and when he returns, remarks, "There is no printed *menu*, but they have everything," and begins to give, slowly and with great consideration, correcting himself several times, nearly a list of the market of Paris.

Miss Anstruther cuts him short with, "Bring me anything, but bring it quickly."

He departs. She takes off her gloves, showing a pair of white hands and dimpled wrists, and prepares eagerly to eat. But after she has had time to grow impatient the guard comes back and disgusts her by asking deferentially, "Will Mademoiselle have it hot or cold?"

"Hot! cold! any way! But be quick!"

He departs again. Barnes looks at his watch, and she has now but eight minutes.

Five of these pass—the girl is beating her foot impatiently upon the floor. The other passengers are coming out of the refreshment-room and taking their places in the train.

This sight makes the famished beauty desperate; she is about to get out of the carriage and endeavour to get something herself, when Barnes suddenly hears her utter a little purr of joy, and, to his disgust, sees the guard elbowing his way through the crowd, followed by a boy bearing a tray, laden with eatables enough

for half a dozen; and curses the man under his breath, for having betrayed him at the last moment.

They are nearly at the carriage. The girl, with a smile of hope on her face, anxiously extends her hands; the *garçon* runs forward to give her the tray; but, by some fatality, the man's foot gets in front of the boy, he trips over it and falls headlong on the platform, completely destroying Miss Anstruther's last chance of a meal. She utters a cry of almost despair, and is springing out to make a desperate flying rush to the refreshment saloon, when the guard says, "Macon is the next *buffet!*" suddenly slaps the door in her face, locks it and cries, "Take your seats!" and then goes very deliberately about fastening the other doors, for it is fully two minutes more before the train leaves. When it does so, it has on it a very hungry and very angry young lady, in the third compartment of the last carriage, who mutters piteously, "The idiot! locked me in *first!* He might have given me a chance at a sandwich!"

But now a horrible fear comes to Barnes; what if *his* supper is not in the train! At this, he begins to feel hungry himself, sympathises with the girl, and wonders if she can endure two hours and a half more fasting to Macon, if his villainy has caused such a disaster, for the girl's little hand is trembling with rage, or hunger, or both, and there are tears of disappointment in her eyes.

He is relieved from this fear at the first station; the train pauses for thirty seconds. The guard unlocks the door of their compartment and puts in a large basket.

As he does so, Miss Anstruther's face becomes radiant; she cries, "You have got it at last! How nice!" and extends her hand.

The guard stops her, by saying sententiously, "For Monsieur! ordered by telegraph! *L'addition!*"—giving Barnes the bill. He pays this, adding a *pour-boire* for the man, and the next instant they are dashing on again, the lunch on the floor of the carriage between them.

The disappointed girl has collapsed on the cushions of her seat; she makes a great effort to appear indifferent, but her eyes rest on the basket in a longing, greedy, wistful stare.

One look at her is sufficient. "She is hungry as a wolf—only waiting to be asked," thinks Barnes, and he politely suggests, "Permit me to repair the stupidity of the guard. I have plenty for two; please accept a part of my supper, Madam!"

Disappointment and astonishment! Miss Anstruther says coolly, but with a hesitation, born of the battle she does with herself, "I thank you; I am not *very* hungry!"

She is a fool to go fasting when the pantry is at her hand—and was on the point of accepting,—when an indefinable something about the affair—she can't tell what—makes her suspicious; perhaps the guard was too clumsy; perhaps Barnes was too anxious; perhaps it was instinct; but she is suspicious of something, she doesn't know what, and declines.

"That is probably the biggest whopper my angel ever told," is Barnes' conclusion, as he replies in his most persuasive manner, "But you are a *little* hungry; now, I think I can tempt you!"

But here a great rush of joy comes over the girl's face, and she petrifies him with these amazing words: "I thank you again; I have just remembered *I have plenty to eat!*"

With this she picks up her bag, goes to the very bottom of it, and fishes out a white paper parcel that makes Barnes' jaw drop, for it has evidently come from a confectioner's.

The poor fellow, at this moment, feels like throwing his unopened basket out of the window; as he reflects, "What an ass I was to imagine a girl travelled without sweetmeats! it's about the same as guessing I'd run about without cigars in my pocket." With this he feels for one, and in a melancholy way begins to remember that there is a smoking compartment, and he has forgotten his weed for over eight hours all on account of this girl, who would sooner starve than accept bread at his hands.

A rustling of the paper parcel comes from Miss Anstruther's corner; he glances at her. She has opened the package—that apparently had been full of bonbons—and is taking from it piece after piece of crumpled white paper,—a look of amazed disappointment on her face. At last, she comes to the end, and draws out two miserable gumdrops and a card with a word or two upon it. The gumdrops go straight to her mouth, for even, in this moment of discomfiture, she is unable to resist such edible morsels. She reads the card and exclaims viciously,

"The little fiend!" then gives one long hopeless sigh that nearly ends in a sob, that makes Barnes crazy to comfort her. But he fights it down, and, opening his basket, goes on eating his *pâté de foie gras* with very good appetite, for he now feels sure that Miss Anstruther will very soon be eating it with him.

By the dim light of the carriage lamp he can see that the girl is watching his evident enjoyment of the meal, with a sad, wistful longing in her beautiful eyes, and Barnes rather savagely thinks, "she'll eat humble-pie before long,—i.e., *pâté de foie gras*." After a little she makes an effort to speak, then desperately checks herself, and a single silent tear rolls down her cheek. He can stand it no longer; gives her another chance, and does it generously.

"You'd better change your mind; railway travelling makes one hungry. Won't you let me give you some of my plenty?"

"With pleasure!"

"Then you are hungry?" cries Barnes.

"Awfully!" she gasps with a faint attempt at a laugh, and the next instant she is in the land of plenty. She doesn't know exactly how; but it is as if she had called on the genie of the lamp—a napkin is on her lap—her plate is covered with everything she seems most to like and want, and Mr. Barnes is acting as the attendant spirit. She tells him so, and he laughingly replies, "Then you must be little Aladdin; but if I remember the Arabian Nights, that little Chinese scamp would have rubbed his lamp and been fed half an hour ago;—don't you think it would be more like it to picture me as Aladdin, the guard as the genie, and yourself as the princess of China, who was so haughtily beautiful?"

Miss Anstruther blushes slightly at this audacious comparison. She remembers the princess married Aladdin; but says nothing, as stimulated by enforced abstinence, she is devoting her pretty mouth to the pleasures of gastronomy; falling to, as Barnes rapturously expresses it, with as much vigour as a fasting monk after Lent.

"Of course, I've no tea or coffee to offer you," he apologizes, "but a little Chablis will do you more good than all the slops on earth;—you look quite pale!"

And so the girl does, though her colour is gradually coming back to her.

"I fear I am robbing you!"

"Oh! I've plenty! I ordered supper for *two!*" he impulsively says.

"For *two?*"—a little look of surprise on her face. Barnes hides his face in the basket, pretending to look for something. "Yes, *two* plates, *two* knives and forks, *two* wine-glasses—how very curious!"

"I—I've got such an awful appetite you see!" he desperately suggests.

"Then you'd better prove it," she laughs; "you've eaten positively nothing!"

And Barnes is compelled to sit down and do duty beside her, which is very pleasant, as he has a very fair digestion himself. As he hands her a glass of Burgundy, a wild rush of electricity goes through him; their hands have met accidentally for the first time. The girl drinks, and whether it is the wine or something else, her face has regained all its lost colour.

There is something in the deference of his manner which gives her confidence in him; and, as Enid Anstruther never does things by halves, when he suggests champagne—which he knows is generally a favourite with women—she simply says, "I'll take anything you wish me!"

The grateful Barnes piles her plate with hot-house grapes, bonbons, and little things men don't as a rule care for, but women adore.

She looks at these effeminate delicacies meditatively and says, "If this is your railway dinner, what a Sybarite you must be at home; one would think you had expected company!"

The young man parries this dangerous thrust, by replying, "You must be just the opposite; you imagine you can make a ten-hour journey on two small gum-drops."

"Oh! that cruel disappointment," she says. "I can laugh now, but half an hour ago I could have annihilated her. Maude Chartris is, at twelve, a glutton and a practical joker. She opened my bag, ate all my candy, replaced it by those paper balls and left me her card." And she passes Barnes a square piece of paste-board that has upon it, in a child's hand, the following:—

"This is to even us for your telling ma I had hanged it to the chandelier by its tale. You are a cat yourself.

"MAUD."

"A sweet child! I adore her!" says Barnes, who thinks of the service the *enfant terrible* has done him.

"Indeed, I don't! and I'll show her mother this card, and——" reaching for it.

"If you do," returns Mr. Barnes,

promptly, "I shall send Miss Maud Chartris enough candy to keep her sick for a year. You'd better let me destroy this!" and without waiting for her answer he tears up the card.

"You take a great liberty with my correspondence!" says Miss Anstruther, colouring.

"Admitted! but think how grateful we both ought to be to her. You would have made yourself sick on gumdrops, and I should have been lonely and disconsolate over in that corner"—for he is sitting near the girl now—"and all this has been changed by the cat and that cherub! Forgive the angelic child."

"An hour ago I could have made the angelic child very unhappy, but now"—she looks at the dainty fragments about her—"I'll forgive even Maud Chartris!" Then Miss Anstruther turns the conversation deftly, giving Barnes opportunity to tell who he is, of which he takes advantage in a manner that is perhaps not too modest.

While he does so, the girl is looking at him in a dreamy way, and thinking the man talking to her can't be such an awful dissipated reprobate as Mrs. Vavassour thinks him; for though he knew the address of that fearful woman, "La Belle Blackwood," still he told a horrid fib because he was ashamed of it. And so Mr. Barnes' two wrongs make one right in the mind he wants most to think well of him, as the train runs into Macon Junction, where fortune is waiting to again smile upon the enterprising American.

Finding Miss Anstruther wants nothing, Barnes slips out to the telegraph station and wires to Paris for his servant and luggage; encounters the guard, and grins mysteriously at him, gives him his twenty francs, and something more for the *garçon* who destroyed his darling's hopes of dinner at Dijon; directs him to get him two railroad rugs, lights a cigar, and is back at the carriage to find the young lady is not there.

He waits at the door for her. The guard brings the wraps, and places them in the compartment, and has hardly gone away, when the girl, for whom the American has been straining his eyes in the uncertain light of the station, comes hurriedly to him, and says, under her breath, in a somewhat perturbed manner, "Two men are following me! Wait till they pass; and as they do, please help me into the compartment as if you were my escort!"

"Certainly!" says Barnes. "Point out the scoundrels!"

"Here they are!" whispers the girl. He takes a long look at the two men who are pursuing him, and assists the girl into the car with the devotion of a honeymoon husband.

She blushes a little at this, but he checks any remark by saying, "Now tell me what these men have said or done to you?"

"Nothing! only I heard one of them remark to the other, 'Keep your eye on the English girl; she's less trouble than the male bird, and just as safe;' and then he gave a description of me!"

"The miserable scoundrel!" mutters Barnes, who wonders to himself what man can be villain enough to pursue and persecute such a beautiful creature; rather forgetting his own present occupation. "Just let him give me a chance——"

But any plots of vengeance are stopped by Miss Anstruther, who says, "You must do nothing in this matter—You see how I am placed."

"Perfectly!"

"I noticed you throw away a cigar as you entered the carriage; please light another, I know how dear the habit is to your sex."

"Not in your presence," says Barnes, with the self-denial of a devotee; for, even with her, a cigar would add a little to his bliss.

"I'm accustomed to it. My brother has educated me to like smoke; besides, if those men saw you smoking they would be sure you were my—my brother," says the girl with another little blush.

"Then on that ground only will I oblige you," and he lights up with an attempted air of reluctance, all the time thinking her brother must be a chap of infinite commonsense, and that the girl has been well grounded in one of the first great duties of wifehood.

After a little the young lady with a low sigh of contentment goes to sleep. Barnes is delighted that she seems so confident in his presence, that even the men who are following her have lost all terror for her, as her rest is as quiet as that of a tired child. A mass of her hair has fallen from its coils and trails down in beautiful contrast to the cheek upon which it rests; one little hand supports her head, the other hangs within easy reach of Barnes, who looks at it and wonders if it ever will be his.

When Miss Anstruther awakes she is astonished to find herself carefully wrapped up in railroad rugs, and though the night is now quite cold, she has slept quite comfortably for almost two hours, and is in Lyons. She throws a grateful glance at the man who has cared for her so thoughtfully; crying, "You had no overcoat; why didn't you keep one rug for yourself?"

"I wasn't cold." After this Barnes keeps silent, knowing that the girl will at Lyons find herself in a fearful dilemma, and modestly waits to be asked to help her out of it.

"I shall have to remain here almost an hour for Lady Chartris! Will you take me to the waiting-room; you have been so kind, you don't mind my troubling you a little more?"

"Not at all," says Barnes; "but how will Lady Chartris get here in another hour?"

"Why, she must have left Paris on the twelve-twenty, one hour behind us. I've studied arithmetic, Mr. Barnes," remarks the young lady, laughing.

"But not the time-table. The twelve-twenty is a local which lays over at Dijon, and does not arrive before to-morrow morning," and he shows her the page in the time-table.

"But there must be some express—some train that comes sooner."

"Yes; the seven-twenty, due here about four A.M.; That's the earliest to arrive. You'll have either six hours in Lyons or no Lady Chartris."

"Six hours here! Alone! At night! And then those awful men!" The first three of these are gasps of dismay, the last a whisper of horror.

The guard here opens the door and says, "A telegram," handing Miss Anstruther a dispatch.

The girl pounces upon and reads the message; it seems to crush her, for she exclaims piteously, "Good Heavens! What am I to do?"

This is not addressed to Barnes, but to Providence; but that gentleman takes upon himself to answer for them both. "Just explain exactly what you want and I'll do it for you."

She darts upon him a grateful look and then addresses him: "My brother is an officer in the English navy. For two years I have not seen him. His vessel is now at Nice, but will, at the most, remain there but two days longer. Lady Chartris has missed our train and now telegraphs me she doesn't like night travel and will not leave Paris till to-morrow. If I wait for her I shall probably miss my brother; what am I to do?"

"Why, go on to Nice by yourself, of course," says Barnes.

"But I can't, Lady Chartris is a stupid, selfish old woman, who thinks of nothing but herself and her children. My ticket is only to Lyons. I have my letter of credit with me, but not"—a slight hesitation—"not enough money to go on, and no banks are open and I am unknown. Will you lend me five pounds on——" here she blushes red, and Barnes blushes also as he sees her hand go to a diamond ring on her finger—"*on my honour.*" She says suddenly and proudly, "I am Enid Anstruther," and she thrusts her card into his hand.

This stroke of fortune takes Barnes' breath away, but he manages to pull himself together, and says, bowing, "Miss Anstruther, you can have a hundred pounds, if you like, and I can get them; but, anyway, you'd better take ten; you may find travelling more expensive than you expect," and he gives her the money. "Only please don't thank me," for the girl is about to express herself very warmly.

"Now I'll get you a sleeping-berth." He goes to the office and discovers that all are engaged, comes back, gives her the dismal intelligence, and, after a moment's pause, says, "Do two hours, more or less, make much difference to you in Nice?"

"No; not a great deal," replies Miss Anstruther, consideringly.

"Then you'd better go to a hotel here, get a good sleep, and leave by the four A.M. train," he suggests; for he does not want his darling's beauty or comfort affected by her knocking about all night in a crowded carriage, and he can see the train will be a full one. "I am going by that one myself."

"Oh! to Nice?" This is an expression of sudden joy from Miss Anstruther.

"If you like, I will make all the arrangements for you."

"Will you?" her eyes beam in gratitude.

Upon this he helps her from the car, and says, "Do you prefer to walk or drive? It is not a great distance to the Hotel de l'Europe."

"Which ever you please."

"A little exercise will be best, after the confinement of the train. You have perfect confidence in me?" continues Barnes.

The girl's eyes look straight into his for

a moment, then she says, "Entire. Do what you think best for me," and places her arm in his as trustfully as if she had known him all her life.

During the short walk to the hotel Barnes is in Heaven; but Miss Anstruther is a vigorous pedestrian, and this joy is fleeting. Arrived there, the young lady is shown into the ladies' parlour, and he goes to make the arrangements for her. A few moments after a neat French maid shows her to her apartments, the windows of which overlook the *Bellecour*, which is beautiful in the moonlight. In her parlour a cosy fire is burning brightly, and an appetising supper is on the table. The maid whispers to her, "The gentleman said I was to come and help you dress at half-past three in the morning; at four a carriage will be here to take you to the train."

"And the gentleman?" says Miss Anstruther, rather eagerly.

"He left the hotel ten minutes ago," is the reply, "but said I was to do everything for you, and was very generous."

Enid Anstruther, tired as she is, sits meditating half an hour before the fire that night. There is a tender look in her eyes, though her thoughts are not altogether sad, and perhaps Barnes has done a better day's work than even he thinks he has.

As for that gentleman, he goes back toward the railway station and takes a room at the Hotel de l'Universe. As he takes off his clothes he looks at the glass, and wonders if he is the same Mr. Barnes that he saw dress in the morning. A fever is in his veins; he has seen strong men stricken down by the disease before. He knows what is the matter with him—he has found the one great passion of his life. But desperate as is the malady, he would not be without it for the whole world. Thinking this, he fishes his divinity's card out of his pocket that he may do a little more worshipping, and for the first time reads her name.

"Enid Agnes Anstruther, Beechwood Towers, Hants, England." The word Anstruther, as seen on paper, seems strangely familiar to him. "Have I ever met her brother?" he cogitates, and after a moment gives a prolonged whistle of surprise, muttering, "By George! that *would* be a wild go!"

And though he turns in very shortly and goes to sleep, like a man of sense, he awakens with a fixed idea in his mind, that is, to learn, as soon as possible, everything in regard to Miss Anstruther's brother.

CHAPTER IX.

"WILL GOD NEVER GIVE HIM TO ME?"

Miss Anstruther is aroused the next morning by the French maid-servant who assists her to dress and makes her comfortable with a cup of tea; and, when she steps from the carriage at the Lyons Railway, she finds Mr. Barnes waiting to help her out.

"You're not to trouble yourself about anything from here to Nice; I am your courier," he says, in answer to the grateful glance and bright "Good-morning" of the girl.

He takes her to a compartment, tenderly wraps her up in a lot of railroad rugs that the guard brings warmed from the waiting-room fire, and, with a slight air of proprietorship that makes her blush a little, says: "You're to go to sleep and not wake up till we reach Avignon, at eight; and then I've some good news for you!"

"Good news! Tell me now!"

"And have you stay awake from happiness? No good news till eight!"

The girl laughs a little and says, "Please!" pleadingly.

But Barnes checks her by, "If you don't go to sleep, no good news till Marseilles,

at eleven!" affecting great firmness of manner.

At this, she falls to meditating on the curious fact that though many men have bowed down to and worshipped her before, here is the first one who dominates her; then wonders how it is that she rather likes it, and so, after a little, goes to sleep.

When she awakes it is daylight, and the sun is shining brightly upon the waters of the Rhone, that flows towards the sea beside them. She looks at Mr. Barnes who is seated opposite, apparently deep in an English magazine, and says with a little rebellious *moue*, "Is it eight o'clock? Can I wake now, *tyrant?*"

"Not for five minutes?" replies Barnes in attempted sternness. "I'll live up to my title!" He knows that the name she has called him gives him more hope and promise for the future than if she had accepted the tenderest devotion from him as a slave. It is the first really familiar appellation she has given him, and it makes him desperately happy.

A little while after he says, "We shall be in Avignon soon; "you look as if you had had rest enough and so I'll talk to you!"

"Then tell me the good news!"

"The joyful tidings are, that you are no longer a young lady without maid or baggage!"

"My trunks! Here!" A little cry of joy, and Miss Anstruther starts up radiant with excitement.

"Yes; Lady Chartris sent your maid and wardrobe by the seven-twenty express."

As soon as they arrive at Avignon, Mr. Barnes brings her servant, a red-cheeked, valuable dumpling of an English girl, who looks with amazed eyes at this man she has never seen before; but who confidently directs her, and evidently expects her to obey him. She has a bag with her, that Miss Anstruther apparently thinks valuable, as she gives it a most tender glance.

Barnes wisely leaves mistress and maid together, returning, however, with coffee and rolls for both, as he has an idea that servants have appetites as well as other people.

This thoughtful attention makes the Abigail his slave at once; she metaphorically goes down on her chubby knees to him, worships at his shrine, and says to her mistress, "Lawks! Miss Enid, what a gentleman! He's such a rusher! He came to me at Lyons this morning and says, 'You're Miss Anstruther's maid?' 'That I am,' says I. The next instant, he has me out of that coach, and your luggage in front of me, and says, 'Get everything that your mistress will need in the train to-day and put it in one bag!' and no sooner had I done so, than he puts me back in my carriage again and says, 'You'll not be wanted till eight o'clock, and then be sharp!' He ordered things about as if he might have been your—your——"

"Yes; all Americans are curious!" Miss Anstruther cuts in.

"Ar'n't they?" replies the maid, "and liberal too; he gave me a sovereign, and now he takes care of my victuals, and manages for you just like he was going to be your——"

"Hush, Thompson!" says her mistress very sharply, "I sometimes let you take liberties with me, but never with my friends!" and having crushed her handmaid with this remark, the young lady turns to the gentleman under discussion, as he puts his head in at the window and hands her a bunch of fresh rosebuds, duplicates of the ones she had worn the day before.

"My favourites!" laughs the girl; "how did you guess?" giving him a look of approval as he exclaims, "You may wish to give some instructions to your maid, so I shall hardly see you till we arrive at Marseilles. I have telegraphed for breakfast there. No more accidental starvation on your part; if it happened again you would blame me for it, now!"

And he turns away towards the smoking carriage, to take a day-dream behind a cigar. Here he sees, opposite to him, the two men the girl had pointed out the evening before. They, apparently, do not wish to attract his attention; and at the first stoppage change their compartment. Barnes gives little heed to them. He thinks, possibly, Miss Anstruther mistook their conversation, as they look rather innocent *bourgeois;* at all events, he is with her, and he'll back himself against the two men any time. Thus they move down the beautiful Rhone among its vineyard hills and olive plantations; and then, crossing the country, run into Marseilles.

On going to Miss Anstruther to take her to breakfast, he finds that, by some inexplicable process, that young lady has got rid of all the general languor and dilapidation incidental to a long railway journey;

and, with the fresh rosebuds pinned on her bosom, is as bright, fresh and dainty as when he first saw her in the *Salon* the morning before.

He astonishes the maid by telling her she is to breakfast with her mistress; for this is a case in which he feels the proprieties must be carefully preserved; and very shortly he has the pleasure of seating his divinity before as luxurious a meal, both in *menu* and attendance, as she can well imagine.

They make a merry party of it, for the girl is in the highest spirits; and Mr. Barnes is metaphorically enjoying nectar and ambrosia and has his pet goddess beside him.

But they are soon *en route* again; and, now that the young lady is thoroughly at ease, mentally and physically, the American, thinking the time has arrived to get what information he desires about her brother, turns the conversation towards her family. Miss Anstruther, from being the Sphinx of yesterday, is now a perfect oracle of information as regards her past, present and future. She tells him, with many little details of interest, that her father and mother are both dead and she has two brothers now living. One, the youngest, a school-boy at Harrow; the other, who is older than herself, a lieutenant in the British navy, who only awaits his promotion to the rank of commander, to resign from the service and come to the family estates to be an English country gentleman, as his ancestors have been before him, for many a generation.

"When he became a sailor, of course he was not the heir; but Harold died years ago and Edwin reigns in his stead. I have made up my mind just what his future is to be," says the girl.

"Indeed! Let us hope you have given him a happy fate!"

"He is to marry some nice English girl of his own rank and be the Squire of Beechwood; and perhaps when that horrid old destructionist Gladstone goes out of power, represent our county in Parliament. It was honour enough for his father, and it should be for him!"

"Must the young lady be English?" asks Barnes.

"Certainly! I don't like foreigners!"

"Do you class Americans as foreigners?" A tinge of anxiety in his voice.

"For marrying purposes, for my brother, yes! I want his wife to have no thought out of England, which must be her home."

"And for yourself, I suppose nothing but English also?"

"Oh! I!—I shall marry the man I love—whoever he is!" says Miss Anstruther, and she begins to play with the flowers in her bosom—then suddenly says, "You Americans are a curious people; do you always travel without any luggage?"

This is turning the conversation into the wrong channel for Barnes, who has not so much as a hand-satchel with him, is even minus an overcoat, and has been compelled this morning to seek variety of toilet by arranging his necktie in another manner, and cleanliness by reversing his cuffs.

"No," he says slowly, "I sometimes carry a cane on my trips, but I was called to Nice suddenly; telegram, business important."

"Well, you do very nicely without luggage," says Miss Anstruther, "so forgive my impertinent question." After this, she goes back to her brother again, sings his praises, how he was wounded in Egypt, and was nursed in the hospital by a beautiful Italian girl, and, when he got well, wrote some wild romantic letters about her that frightened her for fear he would return with a foreign bride. Then tells what a coming home his will be. How Beechwood Towers, their country seat, will make it a gala day, "And so will dear old Hampshire itself," says the girl, her face glowing with the thought, "for the county loves our family, and is proud of Edwin too; he won the Victoria Cross in Egypt."

"Has he served on many ships?" suggests Barnes.

"Oh, yes! oceans of them. The *Monarch*, the *Topaz*, the *Cleopatra*, but now Gerard is upon the *Sealark*."

"Gerard?" Barnes is much interested.

"Yes, I sometimes call him by his second name. My brother is Edwin Gerard Anstruther, V.C., and we are all very proud of him and love him very much, and so will you when you know him, which I hope will be this evening."

"Was he ever on the *Vulture*?" asks the American.

"No—I think not."

Here the maid, whom they have both forgotten, puts in her word and says, "Asking your pardon, Miss Enid, I once carried a letter up to your room with 'Vulture' or 'Heagle' printed on the henvelope."

"Oh! of course. Much obliged, Thompson," continues Miss Anstruther.

"He went out to join his ship, which was in Egypt, as a passenger by the *Vulture*. He wrote to me twice on board her; from Malta, and from—what's the name of the place where the people kill each other, and Bonaparte was born?"

"Ajaccio!"

"That's the name!"

"I should like to see your brother this evening. I rather think we have met before," says Barnes seriously.

"I am glad of that." The girl's eyes show that she means what she says, and Barnes goes into a brown study, for he knows the name on the ship's pistol is that of Miss Anstruther's brother, and that he must be told some unpleasant and unexpected news that evening, and given a decided caution. "In fact," thinks Barnes, "the sooner Edwin gets out of this part of the world, the better. I hardly imagine the *vendetta* would flourish in matter-of-fact England. I admire Marina, but don't want any Corsican nonsense, and in affairs of this kind a chap must stand by his family." With this he glances at the beauty opposite to him, as if he owned her, and imagines how the fellows in New York would envy him; thinks he will again see if Enid will recognise him as the Barnes of the picture, and attempts to assume the attitude of horror and the look of sympathy of the canvas.

This has an unexpected effect on the two women. Miss Anstruther seems to choke in an endeavour to restrain her laughter, while the maid in an anxious voice exclaims, "Mercy, sir, are you *very* ill?"

"No," says Barnes sulkily, "but it is hot and my—my collar is tight!"

"Oh, is that all?" replied the young lady. "You looked in such agony, I feared it was tight boots." She gives a little laugh, and Barnes thinks himself a romantic fool.

Seeing his best game is himself and not his picture, (which he concludes must be "a cursed bad business,") the young man devotes himself to making the day pass pleasantly, and succeeds. Every want of his charge is provided for in advance, with the forethought of experience, and the power of a long purse; and when the pleasant railway journey across southern France with its orange groves here and there, fleeting views of the Mediterranean, and glimpses of tropical vegetation that make it so picturesque, is finished, and the girl stands on the platform of the station at Nice, tears of gratitude are in her eyes and a blush is on her face, as she says, eagerly extending her hand, "You have been awfully kind; you have changed what would have been a terrible journey for me, into the most delightful trip I've ever had; every dilemma, every disaster, in your hands, became a pleasure to me."

"Even the loss of your dinner!" laughs Barnes, seizing her hand and giving it a tender pressure, and then blushing himself for he imagines it is returned—very slightly.

"Yes, even the loss of my dinner. Do you know I once guessed that you had something to do with that guard's stupidity?"

"Great goodness, why did you imagine that?"

"Because you looked so pleased when I had only two gumdrops to eat," says Miss Anstruther, as he puts her and her maid into a cab, and tells the driver Hotel des Anglais, for that's where his divinity is to stay.

After he has seen the last of her, he goes to the Hotel de la Méditerranée in a melancholy way, for with her departure he feels as if something had gone out of his life, is lonely and depressed, and has his first fit of amatory blues, a peculiar disease that makes him curse the waiter—for he thinks his dinner is bad—when it is only that Enid Anstruther is not beside him eating it also.

About eight o'clock he meditates. "She said she wished me to meet her brother this evening; strange she does not send for me. She can hardly expect me to intrude upon her when it is their first evening together for two years; but of course she'll think of nothing but *him* to-night." He jumps up and strolls past the Hotel des Anglais into the public gardens, hoping to catch a glimpse of his goddess at some window. Not succeeding in this he begins to get jealous of her brother for keeping her from him, and working himself up into a dangerous temper, looks about for somebody to vent it upon, and, to his joy, finds one to his hand.

Barnes has just turned back in the gardens, after many fruitless glances at the windows of the des Anglais. As he does this rather suddenly, it brings him face to face with one of the men Miss Anstruther pointed out as following her. This person is now apparently dogging his footsteps. His temper breaks out in a moment; striding up to the offender, he hisses under his breath: "You miserable snake!" and before the man knows what is to happen to

him, he finds himself knocked out of time and flung aside off the walk into a thicket of rose-bushes that seem to him all thorns and no flowers. In a moment the Frenchman struggles from them, and after several deep curses between his clenched teeth, mutters, "You miserable Anglais, there are others who will avenge me—your days are numbered!"

This is unheard by Barnes, who, feeling he has made a fool of himself, doesn't wait for explanations, but continues his walk to his hotel, where he goes to bed in a very glum sort of way. A bad ending to a very pleasant day, but such are the ups and downs of passion.

The next morning, however, hope and confidence have returned to him. After dressing as elaborately as he can on one suit of clothes,—making variety of costume by a new necktie and fresh linen he had purchased the evening before, he wanders out to the Hotel des Anglais and breakfasts there, hoping in some way to get a glimpse of the face for which he now hungers, but is disappointed, and goes to smoke his cigar in the gardens, taking a position that commands the hotel. At one time he thinks he sees her at a window, but soon discovers he has been complimenting a chambermaid by mistaking her for his enchantress. This has scarcely happened when even Miss Anstruther is knocked out of his head by what comes to him through some neighbouring shrubbery.

"Then we have found him at last!" says a feminine voice, that in its intense passion takes him back to the death scene at Ajaccio.

"Undoubtedly, Mademoiselle; he was greatly agitated at the picture. He followed the English girl here; I heard them speak of the navy. These marks on my face prove him to be of that brutal nation!" This last comes from a man.

"Yes," says the female voice again, "he struck my brother in the same cruel manner—his blow was on Antonio's face when he died. You will point him out to Tomasso and me on the Promenade des Anglais today. His hotel, you say, is La Méditerranée. What is his name?"

"He refused to give it to us in Paris at the *Salon*. Last night I would have looked at the hotel register; but after he assaulted me I knew he was on his guard, and very dangerous, and so I did not dare to ask."

"Then meet me at two o'clock, and if your report is true, I will make you rich!" says the lady.

The man walks away, and has hardly passed out of sight, when Barnes, turning the corner of the shrubbery, finds himself in the presence of a young girl who is dressed in deep black, and who raises her head and gives a little cry as she sees him. Old Tomasso is standing a short distance behind with a look of longing joy in his expressive old face.

"Mademoiselle Paoli," says the American, raising his hat, "I am very happy to see you in Nice!"

The girl seems staggered with surprise for a moment; but finally articulates, "It is Mr. Barnes, is it not? I am very glad to see you—you were kind to him. Tomasso, this is the good gentleman who tried to save my brother—you remember?"

The old Corsican only nods his head, but his gaze is kindly.

"You have not been here long?" suggests Barnes.

"No! only this morning."

"And come——"

"For pleasure! To-day is the first time for a year that I am happy!" cries the girl, with a peculiar laugh.

"I never like to spoil sport," echoes Barnes in grim humour; "but I am afraid you will be disappointed. I can tell you the man who will be pointed out to you as the slayer of your brother."

"Ah—who?"—Marina is a picture of joy.

"It will be *me!*"

"You!" she gasps, "You! They have been following you! Will God *never* give him to me?"

Tomasso has not spoken till now, but he mutters, "Some day, and then——!" here the old man's countenance takes an expression that makes the American think of the man-eating tiger of India, whose face is the incarnation of the desire to kill. He turns to Marina and says, "I have something to say to you from your brother, a message from the dead; when can I deliver it?"

The girl looks at him with a white face and answers, "To-day—at any time—Hotel Sebastian!"

And as Mr. Barnes leaves her, she puts her head between her hands and sobs bitter tears of disappointment, the old Corsican trying to comfort her in vain.

CHAPTER X.

THE ANGEL OF THE EGYPTIAN HOSPITAL.

THE Hotel Sebastian is in one of the out-of-the-way streets of Nice, and far from the fashionable quarter. It is little more than a boarding-house, though it has a dingy office and small billiard room, with dirty tables and worn-out cushions. A mixture of Italians, Spaniards, and Sicilians patronize the house; English or Americans are never seen there. To this place Mr. Barnes goes early in the afternoon, and sends his card by a slovenly Italian servant girl to Mademoiselle Paoli. As he is about to go up, Count Musso Danella comes hurriedly downstairs, and taking him by the arm, says, "My dear Barnes!" and shakes his hand. "Old comrade, it seems long since we shot moufflon together in Corsica!"

This is rather effusive and affectionate for Danella, who is generally self-contained and contemplative in his manner, and is a surprise for the American, who rejoins, "Hello, Musso, old boy, you here? Thought you wouldn't be far off when I saw Mademoiselle Paoli this morning."

In truth he is surprised very much to see the girl's guardian here; for he knows Danella, though a Corsican, is a man of the world, and hardly imagines he will permit Marina to run about France with a romantic idea of revenge and murder in her brain, that may some day bring her fair young neck, that he knows is very dear to Musso, dangerously near the guillotine.

"Yes," says the Count, growing serious, and drawing him into a room that is evidently his own, as he locks the door and offers Barnes a chair, "*I* brought Marina here!"

"What! and knew her errand?"

"Precisely."

"That she was in pursuit of the man who killed her brother with the purpose of murdering him?"

"Precisely," says Musso—who seems to have grown younger in the time since Barnes saw him—an expectant happiness being on his face that smoothes out several wrinkles that his gay bachelorhood in Paris has brought him with his forty years of life.

"And you, are a sane man, and permit the girl, whose only counsellor you are, to throw away her glorious beauty and her young life on a chimera of vengeance that might be accounted romantic in the age of the Borgias, but to-day means the executioner or the jailor—and yet you pretend to love her?" Barnes' face has a rather disagreeable sneer upon it, which changes to a look of amazed horror as Danella's reply comes to him, and his mind grasps its cruel significance and insidious import.

"It is because I love her that I aid her! At first I merely *pretended* to assist her to find the man who had murdered her brother; thinking that it was only a girl's whim and would pass away from her like a foolish fancy of childhood. Soon I discovered my mistake, that her resolve and steadfastness was that of a woman who had made a righteous vengeance the governing motive of her existence. After a time I saw she began to doubt the sincerity of my assistance; and hated and detested—my God!—me! the man who loved her! She ran away to Egypt without me, and if I had not followed her, might have forgotten her oath and me!" the Count looks gloomy—but continues, "I arrived in time to prevent that. And then I made a compact with her that when I found, for her, the man she sought, and hate was satisfied, that love should begin and she should marry me, who had given to her vengeance."

"And she consented to sell herself—for your assistance?"

"Not at first," says the Count with a suppressed sigh, "but after a struggle she said yes! She does not love me now—she can love no man now—but when she has no longer her oath upon her, then she will turn to the one being who loves her well enough to take her even with a murder on her soul," and his delicate face becomes bright with a dream of future passion.

"But you forget this is the nineteenth century; and the executioner will have a prior claim upon your bride; in fact, you, yourself, Danella, as an accessory before the fact, will stand a very good chance of a rather long imprisonment; and, with your luxurious habits, I shouldn't think convict life would be a very pleasant prospect." Barnes imagines he has knocked the Count's plans into chaos.

"Bah!" says the latter, "in England, yes! But in that case, I should contrive that Old Tomasso, who hates with all a Corsican's fervour, should do the active work in the matter. But if we find him in France—No!—No French jury would ever, under these romantic circumstances, convict a girl of Marina's beauty of murder. At the worst, she will not be imprisoned more than a year or so. The press would most likely make her a martyr; and the public, her cell a bower of roses. But if we can lure him to Corsica and kill him there, Marina Paoli will be blessed by a native jury as the guardian angel of her brother's tomb."

Barnes casts a mental eye over the latest French criminal jurisprudence, and concludes the Count has very good reasons for his statements; then quietly remarks, "I should judge your victim had better remain in England!"

"He will be safer there—but the world is small!" says the Count.

"And now," replies Barnes, "how is it you dare to make me a party to your crime by telling me your plan?"

"Because you told her," here the Count indicates Marina by a gesture of his hand, "that you had a message from the dead to deliver to her. It is to ask you if it tends to turn her from her purpose not to give it. You are my friend—my whole soul has but one desire—to gain her; and my only hope of winning Marina Paoli is through her longing for revenge."

After a pause of contemplation Mr. Barnes says calmly, "I shall report this matter to the authorities, and so prevent your mad plan bringing danger to the English officer!"

"I considered that matter very carefully before I spoke to you, and do not think you will!" remarks the Count confidently.

"And you suppose that I will be an accessory to your crime?"

"Not at all, in a strictly legal sense," is the reply, "but at present, at least, you will say nothing. You are in love with an English girl—Miss Anstruther—very much in love. You need not start so—you adore her, my dear boy! You have followed her to Nice. She was alone all one night on the railway, and at Lyons you confessed to the guard that you were *épris* with her; persuaded her to stay at Lyons, and took her in person to the Hotel de l'Europe."

"What do you mean?" says Barnes, in a hoarse voice, and with a very dangerous look on his face, for within him is the passion of Cain.

"Nothing derogatory to the young lady's character, for which I have the highest esteem; but I want *you* to have the same consideration for it; and if you should make any declarations to the authorities in regard to Marina or myself, the private detectives that we employ, and who dogged every step of your way from Paris to Nice, must go in the box. Their evidence could hardly be pleasant to Miss Anstruther. There is nothing you Anglo-Saxon Puritans fear so much as scandal; and one would lose her to you for ever; therefore I am persuaded you will say nothing, my dear friend."

Barnes thinks this over, and knows that the Count is right. "Nevertheless," he says, "I shall speak to Mademoiselle Paoli."

"Certainly, if you insist," returns Musso, with a gracious bow, unlocking the door. "Nothing you can tell her, I am confident, will ever change Marina from her purpose," and he laughs a little silvery laugh that is not becoming in him, and calls out after the American, "*Au revoir*, old comrade; run over and have a game of baccarat this evening."

"I have other business, thank you," says Barnes.

"Ah, I see! Love's young dream!—third door to the right, first floor!" follows him in Danella's soft Franco-Italian voice, as he goes upstairs to meet Marina.

The Count steps back to his room in great apparent good humour, and looks at a memorandum from the detectives who have followed Barnes. He reads it over, and wonders what that gentleman and the young English girl had to interest them in the English navy. Meditating upon this, he remembers that Miss Anstruther herself had been curiously impressed by the picture of the duel; and after turning the matter over in his mind, he goes out for a walk; and, chancing to walk down to the harbour and the Hotel des Anglais, asks some rather pertinent questions, and obtains some interesting information which sets him thinking deeply; and in the end produces peculiar results, for Musso Danella reasons on the Italian principles of Machiavelli, which are derived direct from Satan himself.

Barnes takes the Count's advice, as regards directions; and the door is opened for him by Marina herself. She is still in deep black; in fact, she never wore any-

thing but mourning from the day of her brother's death until some time after this the great change came into her mind. Her figure, which the close-fitting dress displays in a series of curves of beauty, is perhaps a little fuller and more rounded than a year ago. If so, it has lost no charm of grace or suppleness. Her face has a tinge of suppressed sadness upon its mobile features, save when some wave of varying passion sweeps across it, and then it is the impersonation of that passion itself, without a trace of any other to weaken its intensity.

As Barnes confronts her he notices the superb vigour of her manner and excitable changes of her emotion.

"Ah!" she cries, "at last! I have waited for you! you have for me the last words of my brother—No! *I* have his last—his cry of welcome to me—Marina!—that was all for me—that was his adieu to earth, *was it not?*" The question at the end is asked in pathetic sadness in complete contrast to the excited rapidity of her first exclamations.

"It was!" replies Barnes, softly.

"But his other words, the message from the dead—and you did not tell it to me before—long ago—you could let a sister wait?"

"When I left Corsica, Mademoiselle, you were delirious from brain fever, and could not have understood me."

"True!" the girl says slowly—and then suddenly, "Forgive me. The cruel disappointment of to-day has made me thoughtless; but to have sought that assassin, for one long year, day by day and night by night, over half the world, and never found him—and this morning, when I was blessing God for having given him to my hand—to again find—*nothing—nothing!*—NOTHING!" In an ecstasy of disappointment the girl throws herself upon a chair, and after a moment makes an effort, and says to Barnes, who has been watching her in silence, "You cannot understand; you are of a race that thinks and does not feel; be thankful that Heaven has blessed you with no heart, only a brain!"

"But you have not heard the message I bring. It may temper your disappointment!"

"Then don't give it to me now! It is what I feared! I forbid you to say it now! First see what I have done—how faithfully I have struggled to perform my oath—how I have laboured to find the man upon whom my hand shall fall—then if you think that even Antonio's words could change the consecration of my life, deliver my brother's message!" This last she speaks as if inspired, but not from God; and, as Barnes does not answer her, brings him a large book of memoranda compiled with the system and accuracy of a detective, showing, that with all its hate, her pursuit has been carried out with a logic that indicates some subtle mind has been brought to bear upon the matter. Barnes concludes wisely that it is that of Musso Danella. He is delighted to have the opportunity of studying her investigations, as it may help him to judge if Enid's brother is in immediate danger of discovery. The first document before him is—

LIST OF OFFICERS.

H. M. S. "VULTURE," 1882.

John Lenox Ward, *Commander.*
Henry Lawson,
T. Edgerton Reede,
Walter Montrose Phillips,
Nelson Trowbridge,
The Hon. Mathew Lennox Haye,
} *Lieutenants.*
George Hodspur, *Navigating Lieutenant.*
Thomas F. Fearing, *Chief Engineer.*
Mortimer N. Douglas, *Paymaster.*
Wellington Elenwood, *Surgeon.*
Arthur William Herrick, *Assistant Engineer.*

And then follow the names of about eight midshipmen, junior engineers, etc.

"That list was obtained from the office of the British Admiralty," says the girl, "and is absolutely accurate, like other official statistics."

Barnes notes here to himself that Edwin Anstruther joined the *Vulture* at Gibraltar as a supernumerary, consequently his name does not appear on the list sent from England, and now knows how Marina has failed to discover him.

The next thing that meets his eye startles him. It is an elaborate description of each officer on the list, with his photograph attached.

"How did you get these?" cries the American, in surprise.

"Time and money did it—but of what use?" says the girl sadly. "Any being of reason would say it must be one of these men whose faces I look on in this book; gaze upon them with me; you saw his face that fatal day, and know it is not one of those who is the murderer that I seek!"

"How do you know that?"

"How? I have seen every man on this list but that engineer who was suddenly ordered to China; this one, who is on the

Gold Coast of Africa, and Reede, who was detached to the *Ruby* in the South Pacific; I have talked with them as I have with you to-day, and they all said that they were too busy with official duties for any of them to get leave the day the *Vulture* left Ajaccio. And then I went to the captain, a close-mouthed Scotchman, who promptly told me that no officer of his left his ship that day—'Catch me giving leave on the morning of sailing—not to a royal prince, by Heaven, Madam!'—and then I knew that there was some conspiracy among them, even including the captain, to keep the matter secret—for they feared a court-martial for their comrade. Had it been in the French navy I could have discovered, because a duel would have brought no punishment; but with these men, who cling together and always fight shoulder to shoulder, I could do nothing."

"And so you despaired!"

"Despaired? You would not say that if you knew me. I took another way—the Hospitals! When men are sick and wounded, in that hot Egyptian climate, they sometimes rave, and in delirium there is often truth. I have been by the bedside of some of them, and one died in my arms and yet gave no sign!"

Barnes is staring at her; in his mind is a vision of the seventeenth century and de Brinvilliers.

But the girl continues, "Though I couldn't find the man whose life I wanted, I found lives to save, and nursed the poor victims of the war and fever, and did some little good—for they said I was gentle, and called me 'the Angel of the Hospital!' and one, a sunny-haired Saxon giant, whose pale face was kind as a child's, and who, they told me, was brave as he was gentle, for he had a cross upon his heart—the one so many of them die to gain—when they brought him in wounded—I—I said, 'He shall go back to his English home; perhaps he has a sister as my poor brother had, who is waiting for him in that far-off land;' and I—they said I saved his life—and he—he used to call me his—his—"

Barnes, whose eyes have been upon the floor, raises them and sees before him, instead of an angel of vengeance, an angel of pity, and perhaps of love; for the girl has now a blush upon her face.

She concludes after a moment's pause of emotion, with a little effort—"He called me his Princess of Mercy—and used, after he was stronger, to walk with me in the moonlight in the Khedive's gardens, and tell me he owed to my kind hands his life. And when he was well he grew to look like a god—Edwin—"

"Edwin!" cried Barnes.

"Yes, Edwin Gerard An—the last is a curious English name difficult for a southern tongue to pronounce—but I have his card." And she produces for him the name of Enid's brother, and cries, "You know him too? Is he not glorious!" For she notices some sign upon Barnes' face, that makes her think this.

"No, I have only met his sister."

"Yes, she is beautiful like him—I saw her, too, in Paris before my picture—you love her, don't you?" and Marina looks curiously at him.

To this Barnes makes no reply, but changes the subject back to the original one, saying, "And afterwards?"

"Afterwards?—Count Danella took me away from Egypt almost by force; he said the climate was killing me. And then I painted the duel!—it was a work of love and a work of hate. I thought perhaps some one in the vast multitudes that throng the Paris *Salon* might give some sign before it, and by that I might discover. A private detective stood, night and day, near by, but all that it has brought me was the pursuit of you."

"And after all this?"

"I should have gone to China to see the lieutenant who is there—but lately the Count has received some curious information from Gibraltar that makes us think there were other officers on board the *Vulture* whose names are not upon that list—Oh, I pray Heaven that he may not have died before I reach him! I want him to know that Antonio Paoli has a sister!" The girl is now once more a picture of intense hate.

Barnes who has been studying Marina's face, and pondering how to bring her brother's words home to her, here says, "When you were thinking of your noble work in the Egyptian hospitals, I should have given you the message from the dead." Then he tells her earnestly but quietly the story of how her brother died in his arms, and that his solemn words to him were, "I had sooner my sister forget me, than that the memory of my death destroyed her life," and asks her, if she, with all her talent, and all her beauty and goodness, has no better work in life than seeking that of another.

The girl answers him calmly, "I have thought of that so often, but I am a Corsican. Old Tomasso would despise me, and I could not look my neighbours in the face in my dear old island—for they know my dead brother was murdered. You talk to me just as de Belloc did."

"Ah, you have asked him!"

"Of course! I took all these pictures to him and begged him to point out the guilty man."

"And he!" continued Barnes, for Marina has paused and is beating the floor with her foot in petulant passion.

"He!" cries the girl, "He! the pretended friend of Antonio, refused to even look at them to aid my vengeance! He said the duel was as fair a one as was ever fought, and the young English officer was a gentleman of great honour and bravery!"

"So it seemed to me also!"

"Ah! you agree with him!—Fair! Brave!—when the man who killed my brother *wore armour!*"

"Who told you that?" gasped Barnes.

"Mateo, the innkeeper. The man was shot in the side and would have died like his victim, but for his cowardly protection."

Barnes here explains to her the incident of the lucky penny, telling her she painted it in her picture.

Upon this the girl interrupts him with a cruel little laugh, and says, "I had no idea my painting was so bad; I meant it to represent a scale of armour broken off by the bullet."

"Then you will not forget?"

"Not while I have these to remember him by!" and Marina points to a portrait of her brother that hangs upon the wall, then brings the American the broken pistol and gasps, "It is stained with his blood!" and taking from her bosom a little leaden ball that hangs about her white neck, cries, her lips trembling with sorrow, "The bullet that killed my dear brother! By this I will remember my oath!"

"You are young yet," replies Barnes sadly. "Some day you'll know it is happier to love than to hate!"

But she answers, rising as if to end discussion, "While I live I shall know but one passion, and that is hate. Until this is finished, not if all the men upon the earth asked me, would I know love!"

"Not if, in the gardens of the Khedive, Edwin Anstruther asked you!"

Marina starts and staggers, as if he had struck her, a great wave of blood rushes over her face and then leaves it deadly pale with misery, and sinking down she utters a cry of agonized longing.

And thus Barnes leaves her, his own phlegmatic nerves a little shaken, for he has had more surprises than he cares for this day; and meditates in a startled, dazed sort of way: "Great Heavens! If those two meet; and she should ever know!"

CHAPTER XI.

"THE OTHER ONE."

After using three matches to light his cigar, in a monotonous, listless sort of manner, Mr. Barnes takes his way towards his hotel, turning over in his mind the various possibilities pertaining to Enid's brother, and decides that that young officer must leave Nice. "They couldn't fail to come together if Edwin stayed here," he meditates. "Marina would be sure to discover him sooner or later. Though I could prevent his being assassinated, I have no doubt, still it would make a very disagreeable complication. Altogether, if he's the man I think he is, I must ship him off to-night." As he begins to plan the details of the affair, he finds himself in front of unpleasant duties at every point. "I shall have to disclose to the chap that he has taken a man's life, and that from now on he must look to his own as carefully as the Czar of Russia guards his precious imperial welfare. And then, how much

shall I disclose to Edwin? I can't tell him his angel of mercy will kill him on sight; he wouldn't believe me if I did. Then if by any chance he should love Marina!"—here Mr. Barnes emits a prolonged whistle and turns the problem over again in his mind, and, having by this time entered the Promenade des Anglais, which is now full of foreign visitors that have not as yet fled from this winter city, he suddenly finds his meditation ended and his problem solved in the pleasantest manner imaginable.

A victoria is coming towards him in the street; in it, a young lady of radiant beauty, in the freshest of white summer dresses, coloured by a corsage bouquet of plush rosebuds and a sash of shimmering satin of the same delicate tint, making a vision whose loveliness attracts every masculine eye on the promenade, except that of the American, who is in a deep brown study. Beside her sits a plain, round-faced girl, with a long, lanky form, big enough to be sixteen, and dressed short enough to be eleven. This child is a mass of gaudy colouring, from her bronze boots and cardinal stockings, to her blue hat and red feather, the parts coming between being clothed in a bright yellow dress and purple sash. As Barnes comes near the carriage the young lady makes a sudden sign to the coachman, the horses are pulled up, and a soft voice says in playful piteousness, "Are you not going to speak to me?"

The gentleman addressed, who has a gloomy scowl upon his countenance, and is at that moment meditating that he has not seen Enid Anstruther for a whole day, and that twenty-four hours is a little eternity, awakes from his apathy with a start; the frown upon his face becomes sunshine; he takes off his hat and answers, "Speak to you? of course! So long as I'm out of the deaf and dumb asylum!" Then seeing that Miss Anstruther has a hand held towards him, seizes it.

His speech makes the gawky girl laugh, and say, "Why you're funny, ar'n't you? You're the celebrated Mr. Barnes, of New York."

"And you, I presume, are the equally illustrious Miss Maud Chartris?"

"Yes, I'm the little girl," here she grins, "that you're going to give candy enough to, to kill her. Enid told me. She's been looking everywhere for you, haven't you, Enid?"

This brings a wonderful colour to Miss Anstruther's face, which Barnes thinks is very becoming. He watches to see how she will parry the innocent's candour, which she does by saying promptly, in a very matter-of-fact way, "Yes, I have been looking for you; there is a note from me at your hotel," and then, with a sudden asperity of manner, she turns on the offender at her side, and exclaims, "Maud, if you don't stop sucking the end of your parasol, Mr. Barnes will forget he promised you the candy!"

"He daren't," returns Maud, with a grin of conscious power. "*The other one* tried to slip out of giving me a *bonbonnière* he said I should have, and you know how I fixed him."

"The other one," jars on Barnes, as well as on Miss Anstruther, who has become intensely interested in the coachman in front of her.

"How did you fix him?" mutters he savagely.

"I—I got him to ask——"

Here his divinity's face becomes so distressed that Barnes cuts Maud short by saying, "You run into that candy shop, half way down the street, and buy what you want, and I'll come in and pay for it." A rush, and Maud is gone; she waits no second invitation.

"What did you make that rash offer for?" says Miss Anstruther, innocently.

"Because I wanted to relieve you of the innocent's candour," says Mr. Barnes, lying glibly, with a laugh.

"I'm rather afraid your diplomacy will cost you dear; you have no idea of her capacity for bonbons; but you have made her your friend; and she is a vindictive and aggressive enemy. Now why didn't you call upon me last evening? I was quite lonely."

"Lonely with your brother here?" rejoins the American.

"My brother had but half an hour with me. His ship was suddenly ordered to Gibraltar, and sailed at sunset yesterday."

Barnes gives a sigh of relief; his problem is solved. Edwin Anstruther is out of Nice, so there can be no trouble for the present. While he is thinking this, Enid continues, "I could not ask you to call last night, because I was alone, though had you come in I should have pardoned your intrusion; but now Lady Chartris is here, and protected by her matron wings, I shall be happy to receive you at any time—this evening, I hope—Oh! what a greedy girl!" This last is addressed to Miss

Chartris, who comes to the carriage, followed by the shopman, who is laden with numerous packages of sweets of every kind; and is proportionately polite and cringing.

"The reason I took so much was because I've a hungry brother and sister; the reason I took so little, is because it gets stale. Thank you till next time, Mr. Barnes, of New York."

"Don't you get enough to eat at home?" questions the gentleman.

"Not of *marrons glacés*," replies Miss Maud, with her mouth full, and as the carriage drives away she cries out, "I like you better than 'the other one.' What are you looking so cross at me for?" The first is to Barnes, and the second to Miss Anstruther, who colours and laughs a little, leaving that gentleman savagely pondering over "the other one;" which is a new distraction for him. "Who the deuce is 'the other one,' and how did Maud fix him?—if she only fixed him so that he won't come to time again, I'll make her a very handsome present." With this malicious reflection Barnes pays the candy dealer, and wonders if a poor man couldn't live on his bonbon bill through several long strikes. Going to his hotel, he finds a little note, in her handwriting, that makes the sun seem a little brighter to him, as he reads—

"Thursday.

"Dear Mr. Barnes.

"Lady Chartris has arrived; so now I can ask you to call that I may thank you again. We shall be at home this evening after eight.

"Yours very sincerely,

"ENID A. ANSTRUTHER.

"Hotel des Anglais,
"Nice."

His valet and baggage having arrived from Paris, Mr. Barnes slips into a dress suit and feels a little the better in it—as men generally do—though most of them detest the trouble of the change. After dinner he woos wisdom by inspiration imported from Havana, and decides on two things: first, not to give any hint to Miss Anstruther of his suspicions in regard to her brother having fought his duel and killed his man—"she had better never know that," he thinks; second, to make himself absolutely certain that Edwin Gerard Anstruther was the English officer who met Antonio Paoli on that morning in Corsica. This can be easily done he imagines, by a little judicious pumping and a look at his sweetheart's photograph album; perhaps, also, he will see a picture of "the other one." This turns his thoughts to a different channel, and he wonders how long it will be—before he buys the engagement ring; and if "the other one"—here he jumps up suddenly and marches straight for the Hotel des Anglais, for a dreadful idea has flashed through his mind: "What if 'the other one' is in Nice!"

The other one is certainly not present as Mr. Barnes enters the pretty little parlour whose windows command the Mediterranean on one side, and the Public Garden on the other; for (the season in the Riviera being near its close) Lady Chartris has almost the best rooms in the house. The lights are turned down, and he thinks there is no one in the apartment. After a moment, a voice comes to him from one of the deep windows; he sees Enid in the moonlight that streams from without upon her, and gets another and new sensation. He beholds the girl he loves, for the first time, in full evening dress. A light, gauzy robe seems to float about and envelop her, permitting some lovely views of her neck and arms, that are exquisitely fair, white and polished, glistening and shining in the subdued light as if they had been stolen from the lost Venus of Praxiteles and given to this girl to complete and enhance the beauty of her face. She does not rise to meet him, but says, "Please sit down here by me in the window; the night is too perfect to spoil it by gas. Lady Chartris will be here in a few minutes, and then I presume she will expect us to call up conventionality, in the form of the waiter to light the chandelier!"

Barnes says nothing, but audaciously walks up to his goddess and takes her hand, holding it perhaps a little too long, or pressing it perchance a little too fervidly, for Miss Anstruther gives out a little feminine "Oh!" and says rather wickedly, "Am I to thank you for making this parlour a rose-garden for me?"

Barnes looks around and sees an immensity of cut flowers all about the room. He has not sent them, and though he curses himself for not doing so, anathematizes the man who sent them more; being satisfied it is "the other one."

"No!" he says slowly. "You must thank someone else for these; I am a man of business; and—shall I tell you the truth?—have had more practical interests of yours to look after to-day than flowers."

This is a much greater stroke of diplo-

macy on his part than he guesses ; his only idea was to palliate not being as attentive as "the other one ;" but he has given the girl something to be curious about, and that curiosity linked to him.

Miss Anstruther is now a blaze of inquiry—"For me? More practical interests? What do you mean? Isn't my luggage all right? Have I lost a box? Did I leave anything behind me in the railway carriage?—or, is it those awful men?" the last in a tone a little tremulous.

"None of these ; you need fear the men no longer ; they were following me. At present, at least, I can tell you no more," says Mr. Barnes, who sees he has made a lucky hit, and does not propose to destroy it. "I suppose you have no idea whom these flowers came from?" He has a little incredulity in his voice.

"Oh yes, I have! I think they were sent by—guess?" "The other one!" he mutters in such a gloomy and morose tone that Miss Enid goes into a spasm of laughter as she gasps "No!—they came from Edwin—my brother, of course!" Then blushing a little, she says, "There is no other one!"—and gets embarrassed as she sees Barnes' face gleam at her unintentional but most suggestive remark. But pulling herself together, finishes—"There is no one at all, and of course there can be no other one!"

"Ah, then the sooner you get one, the better!" returns Mr. Barnes, very tenderly ; who has the theory that when a woman blushes at a thought, she generally thinks it ; and wisely judges that his darling has been meditating about him in the position he wishes to assume ; which is that of the impetuous lover.

"What do you mean by that?" replies Enid, who hardly catches his drift, though she is a pretty quick thinker herself. His answer leaves no room for doubt.

"I mean,"—he says this very slowly—"I mean what a beautiful hand you have for a wedding-ring."

The cool insinuation of this remark gives Miss Anstruther a chill. She hardly likes to say that she hasn't a beautiful hand, which her vanity tells her would not be true ; and if she admits that she has—what next? Americans are a rapid people, and this is apparently the fleetest greyhound of the lot. He has known her thirty-six hours, and has implied more than many men would after a year's worship.

A bright idea strikes her. She crushes him by saying, "That depends upon who would place it there!" Then seeing that she has hit Barnes harder than she wishes to, she loses her head and palliates it by an impulsive "Oh, I didn't mean that—to you!" and finds herself in an awful predicament.

"To me!" Barnes has got her hand, and might have proceeded to extremities and been foolish, for Miss Anstruther was a young lady whose pride would have resented so sudden an assault upon the citadel of her affections, and would have never permitted a surrender to a thirty-six hours' siege. But here a small voice, that is not conscience, breaks upon his ear. It says, "I am in the next window sitting quietly! I thought I would tell you, Enid, as you always like to know if I am near when you have gentlemen visitors!"

The intense silence that follows is broken by Miss Anstruther saying sternly, "Maud, do not tell atrocious stories!"

"It's true! you know you didn't like it when 'the other one' used to come!"

Enid rises in dignity, and says: "Until you can learn to respect me and the truth also you must leave this room!"

"I shan't!" replies Miss Maud, coming in from the window, "and if you go to bullying I'll tell him——" She gets no farther, for Miss Anstruther has thrown open the door, and remarks, "If you do not leave the parlour and stay out of it all the evening I shall tell your governess—you know what!"

Miss Maud Chartris gives a piteous "Don't, please!" and bolts from the room in abject terror.

"Mind over matter!" remarks Barnes.

"Yes," says Miss Anstruther, who rings the bell and orders the waiter to light the room, and does not return to the window. "I always keep one undiscovered crime of Maud's in abeyance, over her head ; and in desperate cases threaten to deliver her to justice. Were it not for that I couldn't live in the house with her. And now will you tell me how much my railway journey has cost you?"

Some men would have replied "Nothing!" and never got asked for another favour. But Barnes, who is an American, as regards business, and a gentleman as regards habit, pulls out his pocket-book and mentions the amount.

The girl fills his hand full of bills, and says simply, "I can repay you your money, but your kindness—I'll keep that,

if you please, to remember you by. My brother doesn't recollect meeting you, but asked me to thank you for him also!"

This is the opening that Barnes wants.

"If you have a picture of him," he suggests, "I can tell you with more certainty."

"Yes—here is my locket—that was Edwin's two years ago!" says Enid with a little smile of pride, and hands him the article, which contains the face of a dark man of about thirty.

"Do you think he looks like me?" the girl asks, after a moment.

"Not at all," says Barnes, very much relieved, for he sees that this is not the officer of the duel. "He is as dark as night, and you are fair."

"Impossible! Let me see!" She takes the locket from him and exclaims, "This is not my brother!" The next moment her face flushes very red and her eyes beam with indignation; she turns to him and says, "This is a miserable joke of that fearful child. Maud has taken out my brother's face and inserted that of a friend."

"Nothing more?" says Barnes rather pointedly, for he had become very jealous of the man in the locket.

"If I had a—a lover dear enough to me to wear his likeness upon my heart, I should not submit it to the gaze of others, I should want it all for myself. Of course it was not necessary for me to give any explanation to you of the matter."

"Of course not," mutters poor Barnes, humbly, who feels he is being whipped for Maud Chartris' fault, "You are sure the girl did it?"

"Certainly. Lord——" she checks herself—"the person whose face was in this locket," for she had already removed the picture, "is a gentleman."

"Oh! a lord is 'the other one,'" thinks the American, "it's lucky she's an English girl; if Enid Anstruther came from my side of the water I shouldn't have one chance in a thousand." He forgets his anxiety for the brother in his interest for the sister, and, Lady Chartris coming in, the conversation takes another subject.

Lady Chartris is fat and fifty, though she struggles for a youth that has gone from her into the distant past; she talks of her early widowhood, and of being a young woman and alone in the world, with only her babies. "This is my oldest," she says, patting Maud's hand, for she cannot reach her shoulder; that young lady having taken courage and followed her mother into the room.

"Ah! a sweet child," murmurs Barnes, sympathetically, for he has many good reasons for making the mother his friend—"how old?—eleven?"

"Yes, nearly twelve," replies Lady Chartris. "How wonderfully you guess ages."

"Oh, I knew she couldn't be older than that, by looking at you," says Barnes, and doesn't even blush at his remark. "A well-grown child for her age."

"Oh, I was as big as I am now when I was thirteen," says Miss Maud, who had been waiting eagerly for her chance to speak.

At this distressing contretemps a silence falls on the group, only broken by a somewhat malicious laugh from Miss Anstruther, who has not entirely regained her temper.

"Ten, you mean, my little one!" ejaculates her mother. "You confound ten and thirteen. Your governess must give you longer lessons in arithmetic. I shall speak to her."

At this prospect of increased tasks the youthful prodigy's countenance falls immensely.

Here Enid takes occasion to mention that they are going to Monte Carlo the next day.

"Yes, we are going to Monte Carlo," repeats Lady Chartris, but doesn't invite Barnes to join the party. Whereupon that gentleman suggests that the ladies permit him to show them the beauty of the Public Gardens by moonlight, as this is their last day in Nice.

Enid half assents, though Lady Chartris thinks it is rather too late, and the subject drops for five minutes, when Lady Chartris, in speaking of Americans, mentions the name of the Countess of Mornington. "She, I believe, is an American; do you know her?"

"Pretty well," says Barnes, "she is my sister."

"Oh!" remarks the widow, somewhat impressed, for Lady Mornington is a very great swell in London, "I'm glad I have met one of your relatives;—but as we are going into the garden with you, we had better put on our wraps at once."

As the ladies leave the room to prepare for their walk, Lady Chartris suggests that Mr. Barnes shall accompany them to Monte Carlo, and that gentleman is very happy to accept the gracious invitation; a few moments after they are in the beautiful gardens, and Lady Chartris being engaged in pursuing the eccentric rambles of Miss Maud, Mr. Barnes finds himself *tête-à-tête* with Miss Anstruther, who is hanging on his arm.

"I went to that wretched child," says the young lady, perceiving her chaperon is not within ear-shot, "and demanded my brother's picture. Maud confessed her crime, but declared she had lost the likeness, and now I have none to show you; but you could hardly forget Edwin if you had met him. He is fair like me!"

"And very tall?" suggests Barnes, who remembers that Marina had called him a Saxon giant.

"Not very tall for an Englishman, but tall for a Frenchman!" This description might be that of the officer of the duel.

"Has your brother any marked peculiarity?"

"No! except that he is very noble looking!"

"That would be the description of any sister!" replies Barnes. "Now my sister, I have no doubt, thinks me very noble looking?"

"Does she?" The incredulity of her voice and astonished expansion of her eyes are not complimentary; but after a second Enid laughs and says, "I don't think I am prejudiced. My younger brother, Arthur, is decidedly ignoble; he bids fair to be a perfect pigmy!"

Barnes can get no information in regard to Edwin that is absolutely satisfying, so he turns the talk into another channel and tries to bring it back to a more personal nature; but, here he finds himself baffled and defeated. Miss Anstruther fights very shy, and is, as he expresses it to himself, "a very wary bird in matters of sentiment" that evening. Try how he will the girl twists romance into merriment, and suddenly remembers that they have lost Lady Chartris; after a short, fruitless search, Miss Edith suggests that, her chaperon having probably returned to the hotel, she must immediately follow her. As they leave the garden, they pass two figures, walking together, whom Barnes salutes; one is Musso Danella, and the other, Marina.

"I have seen that girl before," says Enid, "she is the young lady who painted that awful picture of the duel in the Paris *Salon*."

"Yes," says her escort. "I stood beside you while you studied it."

"Indeed! I did not notice you; but perhaps that is excusable, as I hardly knew you from any other man then!"

"Let me prove to you I was near you," replies Barnes. "Are you very much in love with the gentleman who *pitied* in the painting?"

At this, Miss Anstruther gives a merry little laugh, and cries, "No, I hated him, he was so ugly!"

"Then why did you say you loved him? You might raise false hopes."

"What? in a man on canvas?" cries the girl in a gasp of astonishment.

"No—in his earthly representative!"

At this extraordinary remark the girl opens her eyes and says "Yes,—if he ever heard me!"

"All the same, you should be careful about such statements," continues Barnes in solemn pathos. "Young girls should be very particular. If he had heard you, the man might have broken his heart for you.—Why did you do it?"

The girl gives way to a strain of musical laughter at Barnes' tones—which are those of a camp-meeting parson—and then stuns him with these extraordinary words:—

"Why did I do it?—It was a *ruse!* But we are at the des Anglais; good night, Mr. Barnes, of New York?" Then she laughs again, runs up the stairs to her bedroom, and looks at her beautiful self in the glass earnestly and sadly, and a little tear or two dims her bright eye, as she says to her fair image, "You are lost to me; you will soon be no longer my own—you will be his! He's going to conquer me; I can see it in his eye; he's one of those horrid creatures who go about and make poor girls marry them, whether they want to or not!' And then she gives a little laugh and then a little sigh, and wonders if he is very wild, and then suddenly exclaims, "The wretch! if he had dared to speak to me to-night I would have crushed him—oh, if he should be only amusing himself!"

Here she commences to turn pale and choke, and goes to bed and has a nice enjoyable cry, until the fear that he may see her eyes are red next morning stops her, and she goes to sleep to dream of——

As for Barnes, he goes home stunned with astonishment, and mutters, "A *ruse?* What kind of a *ruse?* A *ruse* for what?" and begins to think that women's minds are beyond the ken of masculine logic, and that Marina's portrait of him must be the *very worst likeness ever painted;* and this makes him think now he can set his mind at rest in regard to Edwin Anstruther, which leads him to very savage thoughts of the "other one," which sends him to bed in a bad humour. And so both he and the girl he adores arrive at the same result, and what is probably best for them after this day's experience, and that is—sleep.

BOOK III.

THE ENCOUNTER AT MONTE CARLO.

CHAPTER XII.

"LA BELLE BLACKWOOD."

THE mind of Count Musso Danella was of that peculiar character that often sees a great deal in a very little. Educated in Padua, he had early become imbued with that mediæval school of pessimist philosophy that, as enunciated by that diabolical Florentine, Signor Niccolo Machiavelli, made middle-age Italy a nation of treachery and deceit, one of the cardinal principles of the faith being that every human action has its controlling human motive—generally a bad one.

Believing, then, that nothing is really unselfish, Danella wonders why Barnes should have taken such an interest in attempting to persuade Marina to forego her vengeance. What difference did it make to the American whether there was one less Englishman upon the earth? But he said a word to save him—*ergo*, it made some difference. Problem: to discover what difference. And turning this in his subtle brain, the following facts startled him.

It was not important enough for Barnes to visit Marina in Paris, for he could have easily found her there, to give her the message from the dead; why was it important enough for him to do in Nice what he had not cared to do in Paris? In other words, what has connected Mr. Barnes so much more intimately with this affair in the last twenty-four hours?

These considerations on the afternoon of the American's visit cause the Count to look over the detective's memoranda, who had followed him from Paris. Two facts met him in the investigation. First, Barnes has fallen in love with Enid Anstruther. Second, Miss Anstruther mentioned in her conversation while standing upon the station platform at Toulon, the English Navy. The Count saunters down to Mr. Barnes' hotel, and, politely pumping the clerk, learns that no one whomsoever has called on that gentleman since he has been at Nice. He wanders up to the des Anglais and discovers that a young English naval lieutenant has waited upon Miss Anstruther, and that, moreover, he is her brother. He goes to the harbour and is told that the British gunboat *Sealark* sailed for Gibraltar the evening before, Lieutenant Anstruther being one of her officers. Arranging these facts in his mind, the question naturally shapes itself, "Was Lieutenant Anstruther of the English Navy the motive that caused Mr. Barnes to try and influence Marina to forget her oath of the *vendetta?*" The American loves the sister, and a service to the brother would tend to assist his suit; besides—here the Count remembers, with a start, this English girl herself had been interested for some cause or other in the painting of the duel. He himself has seen her looking at it on two different occasions. Altogether, though the clue is not as promising as it might be—for Barnes may have been but curious to know how the affair progressed, and been perhaps drawn to see Marina by her beauty—still, in the absence of any other, it is worth investigating.

Consequently, the next morning the Count tells Marina, who is uneasy, feverish and worried, and who shows it to his eyes that follow her every movement, that he is going to run over to Gibraltar by railway; and, as it will be a very rapid trip, she had better take old Tomasso, to look after her, run up to Monte Carlo, and seek to forget all trouble until his return, in a little gaiety and dissipation. "I advise you, *ma belle*, to play a little! The joys of *rouge et noir* make some of us kill ourselves; but their excitement keeps others alive. Do a little gambling. You are rich enough to risk a few twenty-franc pieces for health!"

"You are going to Gibraltar?" replies

Marina, ignoring all else. "Is it that you have a hope?"

"Yes—a hope—a very little hope!"

"Then go! And if you find him, you will find me strong enough to do my part!" The paleness leaves her cheek, and she gives Danella a glance of gratitude that sets his blood on fire.

"I shall be back in a week, *bellerina carissima!*" says the Count, and he takes the railway for Marseilles and Spain, while she and old Tomasso go up to Monte Carlo in the same train that carries Mr. Barnes, Miss Anstruther and the Chartris family.

To the desperate gamester, Monte Carlo is like an opium dream, in its extremes of the joys of Heaven and the pangs of Hades. So it is with Barnes, though the stake he plays for is not generally wagered on the tables of the Casino; but as the smiles of Fortune and women usually go together, a good many pretty girls have probably been lost and won on the roulette table of Monaco.

The first evening at this principality of chance is almost a heaven to Mr. Barnes, and a fairy dream to Enid. After dinner he takes her and the Chartris infant to the Casino and introduces them to the mysteries of roulette; both girls win, Miss Anstruther gathering up enough gold to keep her in gloves for a year; while Maud, by the help of letting Mr. Barnes pay all losses, and pocketing all winnings, contrives to carry off a few weeks' bonbon money.

Both could stay and wager their souls, such is their eagerness and delight. But the luck changing, Mr. Barnes returns the infant Chartris to her hotel and carries off his divinity for a walk in the gardens.

Here, on one of the terraces, they pass Marina. She is seated in a hopeless kind of manner sadly watching the throng. Her dress, which is black as the night, makes her pale face look even paler and sadder than it is. Old Tomasso, who still wears the picturesque costume of his island, stands near, sympathetically watching his loved mistress.

The gay crowd pass her by; the music of the band float around her, but the girl never changes her sad smile, and her mind seems to be far away. She recognizes Barnes' bow and appears for a moment as if she wishes to speak to him; but that gentleman hurries Miss Anstruther on, thinking it safer that the two young ladies do not meet.

Enid notices this, and says, "What do you run past that pretty girl for? One would think she was not good to look at."

"Neither is she, when one has been educated to higher types." This is emphasized by a very killing look from Barnes.

"I do not see any higher type here. In fact I've never seen a more beautiful woman. I'm afraid the trouble is not in her charms, but in your appreciation of them," remarks Enid, who has a way of generally taking the other side in most discussions. "She knows you. Her face interests me, she looks as if she had a history; please introduce me!"

If there are two women in the world that Barnes thinks should not meet, Marina Paoli and Enid Anstruther are the two; but as he can't give his reasons he can only procrastinate.

"Certainly, to-morrow morning, with pleasure."

"No. To-night."

"What! and spoil *my* evening?" a little tenderly.

"Your evening should be ended by this time; I must soon go back to the hotel. There, I see her now—this way—come! She looks sad and lonely; let us try to make her a little happier."

Such a request is impossible to refuse without giving explanations that Mr. Barnes will not and cannot give; besides his divinity's *us* has made him so tender that he is very pliable at this moment. So he walks up, and after exchanging a word with Marina, says, "Mademoiselle Paoli, let me present Miss Anstruther."

As he utters Marina's name, Enid's eyes begin to open, and she cries, "Paoli. Were you in Egypt, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes, a year ago," replies Marina, with a repressed sigh.

"Did you not spend some of your time in the English Hospital at Alexandria?"

"Yes." There is an expectant look now on the Corsican's face.

"And nursed my brother—Edwin Anstruther?"

"Yes."

"Then, darling, you are the woman who saved his life!" and Enid goes up to this girl and gives her a tender kiss, putting her whole soul into her lips, in a manner that makes Barnes hungry for his turn to come; for it is the first kiss he has ever seen Miss Anstruther give, and the manner in which she does it is a beautiful little poem of sentiment.

At this salute Marina becomes deadly

pale and almost repulses her, standing as if fighting back some mighty emotion.

"Don't you remember Edwin?" falters Enid, who still embraces the Corsican.

"Remember *him?*" and Marina seizes the English girl in her arms and gives her a burning kiss that makes Barnes start and mutter to himself, "She kissed the sister, but thought she was kissing the brother."

"What an impulsive dear you are," says Miss Anstruther, arranging her somewhat disordered toilet, "Where are you stopping here?"

"The Grand," says Marina, as in a dream.

"How nice, so am I; we'll go up together and talk about him." Enid puts her arm in Marina's, and they leave Barnes behind them, who follows in a very sulky mood, as he has no liking to play second fiddle to anybody in Miss Anstruther's presence.

The next morning the two girls come down to breakfast together, a sure sign of friendship in woman, and Miss Anstruther tells Mr. Barnes they have spent half the night in talking about her brother.

"She told me of the message he asked her to send me when he thought he was about to die. And I showed her his letters to me afterwards—all but one, that was a little too romantic about her!"

"So this Corsican is the English girl you've picked out for your brother's wife?"

"Not at all. She cannot marry. Marina is going to be a nun."

"A *nun?*" gasps Barnes, in a helpless, stupid way.

"That's what I said. *A nun.* She tells me she will never marry, that her life is consecrated."

"Of course, consecrated, I forgot."

"Did you? You don't seem as clever as you generally are. What are you going to do to amuse me this morning?" says the young lady, with a pretty air of proprietorship, for she had begun to discover that she can dictate to Mr. Barnes once in a while, and rather enjoys it. "You said you would teach me how to shoot a pistol."

And so they take the little Chartris girl, who makes almost too effective a chaperon; for she has ears and uses them; and a tongue, and will use it if they give her anything to talk about; and pass a very agreeable morning together, Enid winning a pair or two of gloves on some impossible shots she forces Barnes to attempt.

She has not invited Marina to go with them, for she prefers the American's company to that of any girl's; though Marina makes an agreeable distraction.

And the evening of the second day approaches that has a surprise in it, and much misery for them both. There has been the usual distractions of gay life at Monaco; a German student, having made love to red too constantly, being jilted, has blown out his brains; a Russian Prince has run away with an Austrian Countess, and a Greek adventurer has had a wonderful run of luck and broken the bank. But the roulette balls run round as viciously as ever; and this evening, though Barnes does not bet on its eccentricities, Miss Anstruther does, with the ardour of a devotee and a woman, which means a good deal; for nearly all the fair sex are natural gamblers. There is a capriciousness in the fortune they woo that is like themselves, and it attracts them; being one of the few notable exceptions to the great rule of nature, that similarities repel each other.

The luck is a little against her, Mr. Barnes notes, as he sees in the crush about one of the roulette tables, squeezed between Enid and a Russian Princess, a woman he knows too well, and who, he thinks, is unworthy to even breathe the same air as Miss Anstruther. The lady looks up and recognizes him pointedly; and, in that social republic, he responds by a slight bow. A moment after the Cattle King from Kansas, who had brought confusion upon him that day in the Paris *Salon*, stamps into the room, forces his way through the excited throng, and standing behind the lady, backs up her bets with liberal ardour; and, she chancing to win, he cries out, "Hello, Barnes, of New York; I say, this is squarer than three-card monté, and most as good as American poker. We'll have a game of that this evening after this is over, if it suits you!"

Mr. Barnes declines to play poker. Miss Anstruther looks up and remembers the cattle sovereign; but, being deep in the mysteries of her system, which consists in betting on the odd numbers—believing in the old maxim—pays little attention to anything else; and, this time being successful, grabs her winnings in an eager manner, as if she feared the croupier would defraud her of them. At this, the lady at her side says something to her; and Barnes grinds his teeth together as he sees his goddess, in the joy of fortune, laugh and reply to her in a very pleasant off-hand sort of manner.

After play is over, for Enid cannot be enticed away before, and her admirer has a chance of a word with her, in fact, is

bidding her good night at the Grand Hotel, Barnes suddenly says, "Do you like gambling, Miss Anstruther?"

"I love it!" cries the girl.

"Then I advise you to play no more!"

"And why not? Do you fear I shall squander my fortune and blow out my brains like poor Von Waldow, the German student? If I couldn't take care of my own, there are trustees in England who grind me down to my allowance!" The remark about trustees is made with some bitterness.

"Certainly not! But the excitement affects your spirits; you exult too much when you win, and despair too much when you lose!"

"Oh, then I make a vulgar display of my passions!"

"Not at all!" replies Barnes, keeping his temper, for he sees Enid has lost some of hers. "You know I do not mean to insinuate that; but to one who has known you as I do—"

"Yes—three days!"

He pays no attention to this remark, which Miss Anstruther throws in with rather a sneering emphasis; but goes on, "You do not seem exactly yourself. Remember I speak to you as a friend!"

"Of course! unpleasant advice always comes from *friends!*" A slight interrogation can be marked in the lady's voice.

"Besides," here Barnes becomes very earnest, "the society of the table is not exactly proper for a young girl like you. Did you notice the woman who sat next you—the woman you spoke to—of course you did not know her face—it was that of the infamous 'La Belle Blackwood'!"

Barnes has lost his head and left himself open for a tremendous return shot, and he gets it.

"But *you* did! Yes, and bowed to her too, when you were in my company; do you suppose I would have spoken to the creature unless *you had guaranteed her by your bow!*"

"I?" murmurs Barnes, who has not expected this view of his conduct.

"Yes!" cries the young lady, who is now thoroughly angry and will give no quarter, "and you know her address in Paris, and told it to the cattle scoundrel, and fibbed about it in very shame, saying you had read it in the *Figaro*, when I looked over every line of that paper and it wasn't there! Oh, it is noble in *you* to reproach *me* with having brushed past her in a crowd!"

"Very well!" says Barnes, who concludes that he had better not discuss "La Belle Blackwood" any more that evening. "Continue to play, but remember that I warn you, you will regret it before three days!"

"Will I? Not so much as you will regret insulting me!" And planting this Parthean arrow in her worshipper's heart with a very savage glance in her eyes, Miss Anstruther rushes up the stairs and flies to her room.

As for Barnes, he walks out into the moonlight, thinks it the blackest night of the season, and says in a horrified way, "If I have lost her! She's not an angel, but I want her more than all the angels in Heaven!" Then he mutters to himself, "If I don't win this battle she will despise me, and 'the other one' will get her!" This sets him to thinking deeply. He knows "La Belle Blackwood" too well not to know she will address Miss Anstruther again. She has that self-assertive *diablerie* that loves to insult the world from which she is cast out, and had made her infamy very famous by several times furnishing the Parisian journals with piquant little paragraphs in which her name has been coupled with that of ladies of the *grande monde*.

Barnes makes up his mind that by no chance shall this happen to the object of his devotion, so he walks off to the Hotel de Paris, and sends up his card to "La Belle Blackwood," and, while waiting that Aspasia's answer, sees to his joy a miserable little French dandy come sneaking downstairs and go off into the darkness. "I have a card that'll fix Madame la Diable now," he reflects, as he is shown to that lady's luxurious apartments.

"La Belle Blackwood" receives Mr. Barnes effusively.

"*Ah! mon cher*," she says, speaking between the puffs of a deliciously-flavoured Russian cigarette, and half reclining in a languid feline manner in a sumptuous armchair, the blue satin of which is in admirable contrast to the delicate tint of her dress—for she is in a masterpiece of Worth's, and looks as fresh as a violet after all her years of dissipation—"Make yourself at home, my boy. Will you have a glass of Chambertin, a cigarette, or both?"

"Neither, thank you," replies the gentleman coolly.

"Then take a chair. If you're not always thirsty you are always lazy."

"Not at present—I am here on business—unpleasant business!"

"You?—business?" The lady opens her

eyes in supreme surprise. "You never did any business before in your life!"

"Perhaps not; but I'm going to do a stroke to-night. You addressed this evening at the Casino a young English girl?"

"Ah!—the one with whom you are so much in love? I can see you have always good taste! Your charmer is here—*alone?*" This last question is put with such a leering insinuation that if Barnes had any thought of sparing the miserable creature one pang in the interview he throws it away.

"No!" he replies. "Had she been of your kind I should have nothing to say to you on the matter. She is under the charge of Lady Chartris, and you dared to speak to her publicly this evening."

"And why not—if I cared to?"

"Because your addressing her was an impertinence!"

"Was it?" says the lady, yawning politely in Mr. Barnes' face, "then I shall be impertinent again to-morrow!"

"Excuse me, you will not."

"And why not, *mon cher?*"

"Because you are going to leave Monaco to-morrow morning before Miss Anstruther gets up."

"And what makes you think that, imbecile?" says "La Belle Blackwood," who is beginning to get angry, though she likes Barnes in a general sort of way.

"Because I am going to compel you to leave."

"You? You are impertinently funny. Tell me how, you idiot."

"Because, if you don't I shall tell Ruggles that M. de Cravasse is here, and it won't take him long to find out who that gentleman is."

"So you would betray me?" she answers, for the Cattle King's millions are at present an object to her. "But I shall not go, all the same. I love money a great deal, but I'll risk a break with M. Ruggles to make you unhappy, you miserable *canaille* of a *canaille* nation," and she lashes herself into a fury and calls Barnes and his—and her country too, for that matter—some very unpleasant names, for "La Belle Blackwood" has the temper of a fiend when she allows herself the luxury of giving it an outing, which is pretty often.

Mr. Barnes stands before her and takes her invective in silence, but with a very ugly look on his face; for he has played his card and lost. He had supposed the woman loved money more than all else, and he now finds she likes her wickedness even better.

Seeing he makes no move to go, she finishes in these words: "You come to me, a priestess of vice, and prate of virtue; you, who call yourself a man of the world, that means the same as harlot in woman. You wish to shield your innocent miss, who is innocent because she is not old enough to have learnt vice, and to protect her dainty exclusiveness you insult me. Fool! you know I always keep my word; and I swear to you if she comes to the Casino to-morrow I will kiss her lips, and if she resents it, which has the most to lose by scandal, your immaculate angel or 'La Belle Blackwood'? And now, the door," giving him an invitation to go with a very impressive gesture of the hand.

Barnes knows the woman will keep her word. To prevent Enid's going to the Casino involves an explanation that in all probability may cost him what he dares not contemplate, for he knows the haughty pride of Miss Anstruther. He almost staggers from the room.

But as he goes out "La Belle Blackwood" gives him a burst of mocking laughter, and cries after him, "My kiss won't hurt your baby; I was innocent myself once."

A flash of thought, and Mr. Barnes comes back into her presence, and says shortly and in a hoarse voice, for he is very desperate now, and will spare no man nor woman to save the girl he loves from any scandal or annoyance—"Do you know a man named John Marshall Spotts, of Cresline, Ohio?"

She gives a gasp.

"Do you know a woman named Martha Strowbridge Spotts, of the same place?"

"My God!"

"Within two weeks from this time there will be placed in their hands a portrait of you, a description of you, and your life and career taken from the Paris journals, also a remark about that little scar upon the back of your fair neck; yes, that one you put your hand to—the one you wear the lace to hide. Do you think they will know 'La Belle Blackwood' then?"

"Oh, God! My mother! They think me dead! It will kill her!" And this woman who has fought her fight in all her pride of folly and wickedness falls on the floor and writhes and grovels at his feet, crying between her panting sobs, "Have mercy! Have mercy!"

"Then leave Monaco before nine o'clock to-morrow morning or you know I will keep my word." Barnes leaves the miserable woman, confident that he has won his battle, and going to his hotel he mutters a

prayer—the first he has uttered for years—"That he may win his idol yet," which, being of a practical mind, becomes very like a petition to Providence that Miss Anstruther may have an awful run of bad luck at the roulette tables, and so be brought to bow down to him and acknowledge him as her guardian angel once more—an event that is very likely to happen.

CHAPTER XIII.

"BORROW IT FROM BARNES!"

THE next morning Mr. Barnes, who rises earlier than is his usual habit, strolls over to the Hotel de Paris and inquires for "La Belle Blackwood." He is informed by the clerk, with a shrug of his French shoulders, that Madame has gone. "She complained of malaria; malaria in the Riviera!"

"And M. Ruggles?"

"He has followed after her; he was very angry; he was swearing!"

Barnes wonders whether the proprietor, who has a kindly greeting for him, would look upon him with so much complacency if he knew that it was to his kind offices he owed the loss of two of his most extravagant guests. He goes over to the Grand Hotel and sees Enid and Marina come down to breakfast once more together; the two young ladies having discovered, perhaps, that they are an excellent contrast: one, dark and grand; the other, fair and graceful.

Miss Anstruther appears a picture of vivacious tenderness to all in the party, save Barnes; she figuratively tickles Lady Chartris' fat sides by one or two little *bon mots* from the Parisian newspapers, and compliments Maud on a new dress, till that practical and outspoken infant says suspiciously, "What do you want me to do for you, Enid? You can't bribe me with words; I'm not Mr. Barnes. Why haven't you spoken to him? he's been looking at you for five minutes!"

Thus compelled, Miss Anstruther says, "Good morning!" to the object of her displeasure, in a frozen voice and with a glacial glance; then, not waiting for his reply, rushes into an animated conversation with Marina that lasts through breakfast, trying to show how excitedly happy she is; and, in this, being easily distanced by the beautiful Corsican; the real article beating the sham, as for some mysterious reason Marina is to-day a creature of joy.

Barnes imagines it is because Enid makes her feel Edwin is near her.

They have hardly finished the meal when old Tomasso enters, and with respectful reverence announces to his mistress, "Signorita, the carriage for you is at the door!"

At this both the young ladies go to their rooms for their hats; some expedition apparently being in their plans for the day. Mr. Barnes walks out and posts himself by the carriage, determined to see if Miss Anstruther will stick to the line she has taken through breakfast with him.

Marina comes down first; and as he places her in the landau, she gives him a little squeeze of the hand and says, "Thanks, Mr. Barnes, for your pleasant acquaintances; you have made my life that was lonely here, very happy. But what have you done to Enid? She is extremely angry with you?"

Reply is here interrupted by Miss Anstruther, who coldly accepts Mr. Barnes' assistance to step into the carriage; but her manner indicates that it is under protest, and instead of thanks she gives him a very ugly flash of her eyes.

Marina, apparently anxious to palliate her companion's coldness of manner, says, "We are going for a little drive towards Mentone, would you—" here she pauses with a little gasp of pain, for Enid has given her a cruel pinch, and before she can complete the intended invitation, Miss Anstruther remarks cuttingly, "We would ask you to join us, but fear to take you from your *other* lady friends!"

With that the carriage drives off, old Tomasso sitting gravely on the box beside the driver, and the two girls in a feminine dispute about something.

"I don't envy poor Marina her drive with my angel this morning. What a fiendish pinch she gave her to cut off my invitation," thinks the American. "I suppose *other* lady friends means 'La Belle Blackwood.' What a cursed dull place Monaco is!" and he gives a sigh and longing look at the carriage that is just getting out of sight. Then he goes in to do the agreeable to Lady Chartris and family; but, making very poor work of this, he wanders off to the Casino, where he meets some men from New York, who have come there in a yacht; and they have a very wild day of it, though perhaps not a merry one for poor Barnes.

The two young ladies come back from their drive, if possible, better friends than before; and soon go arm-in-arm to the Casino, where Miss Anstruther rather shocks her companion by the desperate manner of her play; wins an amount of money that astonishes her, and comes back to dinner with a reckless triumph on her face that makes it look very beautiful and rather naughty. Mr. Barnes being present, she displays her luck by giving Miss Maud Chartris a couple of twenty-franc pieces for a present; and tells that infant prodigy of her wonderful fortune and the great profits of her play, until Maud's eyes grow very large with greed of gain and lust to win herself. Enid has raised up a spirit in the little girl that ultimately turns upon and rends her and strikes her to the earth upon a later day; for she has made that juvenile prodigy crazy to gamble.

After bolting her meal in an eager sort of way, for she is anxious to get back to her occupation again, and has a vague idea of winning some fabulous sum and flaunting the gold in Mr. Barnes' face, to show him how wise she *is*, and how foolish he *was*, Miss Anstruther seizes upon Marina again, and drags her off to the roulette tables, attended by old Tomasso.

It is night; the lights, the surging crowd of people, the music from the far-off band—all excite this wild young lady, and she plays with a feverish energy, that alarms Marina, who cautions her, and gets snubbed for her advice.

The luck, after one or two little fluctuations, settles against her; and Miss Anstruther goes home in a very angry mood against fate, and the world, and Mr. Barnes. Consequently, that gentleman the next morning gets a genuine astonishment; not from Enid, but from Mademoiselle Paoli.

He doesn't see Miss Anstruther; she has a headache; but Marina greets him at breakfast with marked coolness; and a few minutes after, happening to see him alone in the hall, this peculiar young Corsican comes to him, a great flash of anger in her eyes, and says sharply, "A word with you, Signor Barnes."

"A hundred, if you are kind enough to talk to me, Mademoiselle Paoli!" here he stops, and looks at her in astonishment, for her great brown Spanish eyes are like coals of fire.

She doesn't keep him long in suspense, or beat about for any delicate expression, for she opens in these astounding words, "What makes you such a villain?"

"I?—a villain?" stammers Barnes, who isn't quite sure he understands her.

"Yes! a villain! What have you been doing to Enid?"

"I?—Nothing!"

"That is not true! Why did she treat you coldly yesterday?"

"Why, really——"

"Ah! You dare not answer! And what did you do to her last evening?"

"I?—nothing! I didn't see her!"

"Impossible!—Last night we returned from the Casino; she was in feverish spirits. Half an hour afterwards I chanced to pass her room; love has sharp ears, and I caught a sound of suffering. At first she refused to admit me, but I told her I would break down the door, and then I found her in tears. She passed half the night sobbing in my arms; I took the place that should have been occupied by you."

"Yes—ah, of course, I should have been delighted to have been there!" murmurs Barnes, who wonders which of them is an idiot.

"And yet she said you had insulted her! You have led her on to love you, and now you are breaking her heart!"

"I'm delighted to hear that," says Barnes, in rapture.

"Ah! and you glory in it! But remember that I love Enid, and that if you play with her heart you shall answer to me, Marina Paoli!" She leaves Barnes, but turning at the head of the stairs she hears a succession of shrill sounds, and then mutters to herself, "The heartless one; destroying Enid's happiness, and whistling joyously over it!"

For this communication gives Barnes as

much delight as it would have given Miss Anstruther chagrin if she had known that he received it. He murmurs to himself, "The roulette tables are playing my game for me with a vengeance—breaking my heart! My darling!" and he goes about whistling the merriest airs of the merriest French operas, even enduring with wonderful *sang froid* a fearful stab with the eyes that Enid gives him when she makes her appearance an hour or so afterwards.

Miss Anstruther makes an attack upon the tables that afternoon, and returns to the hotel a heavy loser; and at night, being desperate, from a mighty desire to compel Barnes to own that she is right, and can take care of herself at roulette, she puts in her satchel all the available funds she commands, except a little rouleau of gold that the one flash of reason remaining to her that evening counsels her to keep for an emergency, and, getting Marina to accompany her, goes to the Casino—not to woo fortune, but to conquer it.

"I *will* win!" she hisses to herself, clenching her two rows of pearls together that serve her as teeth; and whoever has said these three unlucky words, knows that they are a spell against good luck.

This is the case with Miss Anstruther, and all through the evening she no longer places her stake than it is raked in by the croupier, whom she begins to regard as an imp of darkness. She can't lose for ever, she thinks, and makes a bold try for fortune by betting on a single number, and wins thirty-five times the amount of her wager. Marina, who has been astounded at the sums Enid has lost, whispers to her, "Come away; it is luck enough for to-night."

And so she will. She is holding out her hand for her money, when she sees Mr. Barnes looking at her. "He will think his power drove me away," mutters Miss Hothead. She shakes off Marina's hand, that would draw her from her fascination, and bets more recklessly than ever. And now fortune leaves her entirely, and goes from bad to worse, until she must stop, because her last louis has been staked and lost. But Barnes is still looking earnestly at the girl—she thinks with a lurking smile—so she whispers hurriedly to Marina.

"Certainly," says the latter; "you know what I have is yours. All English are rich, I believe; but you must be very wealthy to lose as you lose."

Enid borrows from the Corsican an amount equal to what she has left behind her at the hotel. "This I can pay to-morrow," replies the English girl, and will take no more. But this she bets very wildly, and in a few minutes says to Marina, "It is the last, and it is gone!" then, looking about for fear Barnes may be near and see her misfortune, she whispers "Come, let us go home; I'm tired of bad luck."

So the two walk to the hotel together in the moonlight, attended by Tomasso, who is like his mistress' shadow in this wicked place, though perhaps he may have had his orders from Count Danella, who never forgets anything.

"Will you come up to my room and get your money, Marina," says Miss Anstruther, "or shall I pay you in the morning?"

"At your leisure, *mia amiga!*" and the Corsican girl kisses the English one, then, after a little, murmurs, "You are like your brother; he is reckless also."

"Oh! my losses are a mere *bagatelle!*" replies Miss Anstruther, airily, for she has a fearful pride in her this night, and goes up the stairs very haughtily. But, getting to her own room, this mere *bagatelle* makes her sigh and shudder, and give a little groan. She has squandered her quarter's allowance; she has drawn every franc of her letter of credit. She remembers she has unpaid bills. When she has given Marina her money in the morning, she will have to borrow from Lady Chartris, and Lady Chartris, she knows, is a most uncomfortable woman from whom to borrow. Then she thinks of the cause of all her woe. Oh! if he had not said cruel things to her about her passion for gambling—but she forgives him; it was that awful woman. And she imagines "La Belle Blackwood" as a kind of female dragon, devouring innocent youths that look like Mr. Barnes, and cries out to herself, "The horrid monster! I could kill her!" and clenches her fist as if to do it.

But here this chivalrous feminine St. George utters a suppressed shriek. Her doughty knees smite together, and she nearly faints, for in the subdued light of the room, concealed under the clothes of her bed, she sees a hidden form—a burglar, or a man, or something—and is about to let forth a cry that will raise the hotel, when Maud Chartris puts her curly head from under the sheets, and in a pathetic whisper says, "Enid, don't shriek; it's only me! Don't scream, but forgive me!"

"What are you doing here, you frightful child? Get out of my bed!"

"Not till you swear you won't tell ma!" Here Miss Chartris begins to sob, and Enid can see the child is really in earnest. "Tell your ma—what?"

"Tell her that I stole—I borrowed all your money!"

"My rouleau of gold?" gasps Enid, rushing to her drawer and opening it, tremblingly.

"Yes. You needn't look there; it's all gone!"

"Wretch! you have stolen my *honour!*" cries Miss Anstruther, in a voice like Lady Macbeth's, and seizes the child who has brought despair upon her, and drags her to the floor, where she lies grovelling for mercy among the bedclothes she has carried with her, for her victim's face and manner almost paralyze this youthful culprit.

"Where has it gone? How have you lost it?"

"I played it away at roulette; you bragged to me last night how you won money, and I thought I could win too, and so I borrowed it and—and lost it to-night after dinner: and swear you won't tell ma! She'll kill me—she'll——" Here Miss Chartris becomes inaudible for sobs.

"My Heaven! I must have that money to-morrow. I must borrow it from your mother!"

"Borrow it from *ma?*" a howl of apprehension on the last word. "It'll all come out! If she knows she's got to pay back money I stole, she'll—I dare not think—I shall be sent back to England. Oh, Enid! Mercy! Don't tell her! Don't! Don't!" and the frightened criminal goes into another convulsion of despair.

A moment's reflection shows Enid that Maud is certainly correct as to the pains and penalties that will come upon her if her mother discovers; for if there is one crime in the Decalogue that Lady Chartris would visit upon her guilty offspring in a fearful manner, it would be the one that compelled her to pay out money for that fault. Even in all her own misery Enid can't help pitying the miserable child, whose crime she grimly thinks is not much worse than her own, as she looks at her sobbing at her feet. She takes her in her arms and soothes her and says, "Maud, darling, you need not fear; your mother shall never know."

"Promise!"

"Yes!"

"Then you're a brick!" She had learnt this slang from Mr. Barnes. And Maud becoming smiles again, for she knows Enid's word is her bond, takes to kissing that young lady, who is very miserable. and sits in a stunned way, giving little gasps of despair. After a little Miss Anstruther begins to sigh and say, "What shall I do? I must have the money."

"Must you have the money to-morrow, Enid?"

"Of course I must. Why do you bother me?" says the young lady helplessly.

"Well, then, I'll get it for you," cried Maud, who has hidden herself in the bed without removing any article of her dress, springing eagerly up.

"Get it for me? What nonsense! How?" asks Enid, only half heeding her.

"*Borrow it from Barnes!*" screams Maud, and darts from the room.

These fearful words fly through Miss Anstruther like an electric shock. There could be no shame, no degradation like that. She rushes after the girl calling wildly for her to come back.

It is only ten o'clock and the grounds are pretty full of people, and Miss Anstruther cannot catch sight of the child, though she even leaves the hotel to do so; for the horrible thought of what Maud means to do makes every nerve in her body tingle with an agony of humiliation. "*Borrow it from Barnes! Borrow it from Barnes!*" sings in her ears, and every throb of her heart brings a flush of deeper shame to her face.

So it comes to pass that Enid, after wandering about the grounds for a few minutes, returns to the house to find herself confronted by Maud, who has Mr. Barnes by the hand, and has just been explaining something to him in a very eager and excited manner.

Miss Anstruther comes straight up to them; there is a high colour in her cheeks and a sparkle in her eye, as she says, very angrily to Maud, "Do you dare to speak another word—go upstairs and go to bed, or I shall forget the promise I made you!"

The object of her speech gives one look at her, collapses and shrinks into the house, and the young lady turns to Mr. Barnes.

That gentleman as he looks at her has a kind of an inspiration that his fate will be settled within the next five minutes. He knows, if he wounds her pride in the slightest, Enid Anstruther will never speak to him again; so he waits for her to begin,

wondering if this is the last time he will ever hear her voice.

"What has that child been saying to you about me?" The question is put most uncompromisingly, and Barnes knows it is best to answer it truly. So he gives a little account of what Maud has told him, which is simply a statement of what had occurred in her room. "As I understood her," he adds, "Maud has taken, unknown to you, a sum of money of which you were in need to-morrow; if you asked Lady Chartris to lend you the money, she feared her mother would discover her fault, and you being anxious to save the child from punishment had promised her not to apply to her mother, and so she came to me!"

"Of course you know I did not send her on such an errand!"

"Of course not!" says Barnes promptly.

"Certainly not—after the way you have treated me!" continues Enid with a reproach in her voice.

She has opened the argument; Barnes knows she hesitates and that he has her, and disarms her with this speech: "You are right; I apologize for the injustice I did you the other evening. I reproached you because in the Casino you spoke to a woman unworthy of your notice. Your innocence could not know her by sight, my wickedness did; but like most men of the world, I have been, perhaps, a little careless, for I have had nothing to anchor me to goodness."

This is very cunning, as Barnes says nothing of his warning Enid against her passion for gambling, in which he was all right, and only speaks of the "La Belle Blackwood" side of the episode in which he was all wrong.

He gets the advantage of this in the girl's reply, "Yes—but men have so many temptations!"

"So we have!" says Mr. Barnes, "if I had been poor I might have been better."

"I do not regard wealth as such an evil!" says Miss Anstruther.

"Nor I, at present!" echoes Barnes, "for it enables me to do something that will make me very happy if you will permit it. Won't you tell me exactly how I can aid you in this matter, in which you have treated Maud so nobly? Come out for a little walk, we will be more alone in the grounds!"

Miss Anstruther finds it hard to be very angry with him, and they go off together.

"Now," he says, "you consented to accept a service from me in Lyons, when you knew me not as well as you do now; will you hesitate to do me a like honour this evening?"

This reminds the girl of his consideration for her, during the embarrassments of her railway journey; she grows very tender towards him, and tells him all her troubles of the last two days, and he arranges her money difficulties in an easy off-hand manner, that takes all embarrassment from her. She is to write to her brother; and when he sends her the funds—as he is sure to do—she will repay Mr. Barnes.

This agony being off her hands, her spirits seem to leap from bondage, and she is more charming than ever she has been to him before, perhaps because she is a little more self-conscious in her manner, and blushes once or twice when she looks at him, as they come back to the hotel. "Then," says Mr. Barnes, "you prefer being under obligations to me rather than to Mademoiselle Paoli?"

"Y-e-s—a little!" bashfully.

"And you like me better than you did the other evening?"

"Very much!"

"And why?"

"Because you haven't scolded me—when to-night I really deserve it; for I have been a gambler for the last two days—and was in awful trouble if you hadn't helped me—oh, why are you so kind to me?" And desperately fearing an answer to this question, Enid runs upstairs; but before going to her own room opens softly the door of the wicked Chartris infant, and stealing up to her gives that sleeping criminal a most affectionate kiss.

Barnes looks out of his window and wonders why Monaco is such a jolly place, and says, "To-morrow!" as if he meant it to be a very important day in his life.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TELEGRAM FROM GIBRALTAR.

THE next day is a very bright one at Monaco; the sun rises gloriously in all its Mediterranean splendour, perhaps a little too warm when not tempered by the gentle sea-breeze of the Riviera, but, in the shade of the olive trees and ilex, the temperature is perfect. It would be romantic to any one not dead to all the charms of nature, but to Barnes, as he dresses himself, looking out of his window on the quiet scene, it seems an inspiration. He mutters "*To-day!*" to himself; then looks at his hand to see if it is as steady as usual, and proudly says, "Not a tremor!" though what he means by this it would be difficult for any one but himself to tell.

Miss Anstruther comes down to breakfast. She has no headache this morning, and gives him one or two flashes of the eye and several little blushes in a curious, wistful, pathetic sort of manner, though she seems in a kind of half fright, and doesn't eat very much.

Towards the end of the meal Lady Chartris says, "You have lost your appetite, Enid!"

"Yes! and I know what caused it!" this last comes from Maud, who has regained her spirits over night. "It's because of that letter you got this morning, ma! That tells that 'the other one' is coming!"

"The other one?" says the girl's mother. "I don't understand—oh! ah! yes! Lord Ferris!"—and then, seeing she has made a slip of the tongue—for Miss Anstruther has a very red colour, and Barnes is cutting his beefsteak as savagely as if he were operating upon 'the other one' in person—Lady Chartris turns upon her too candid offspring, and in a voice that carries dismay to that young lady, remarks, "Have I not told you, Maud, never to read my letters! Go upstairs and go to bed!"

"Ma, I haven't had any breakfast!"

"Go upstairs!"

"Ma! I haven't——"

"Obey me!"

"Ma—a—!" This last is a wail of anguish in the distance.

Barnes looks up and finds Miss Anstruther gone also. Arising, he steps out on to the balcony, and lighting a cigar, after a puff or two, says to himself, "No time like the present!" then walks into the gardens of the Casino. Here, after looking about for some little time, he sees the fluttering of a dress he knows on the most retired part of the terrace; and, following it, throws away his weed, and says very gently, "Enid!"

* * * *

Thus it comes to pass that half an hour afterward Maud Chartris bursts into Marina's room and whispers to her in a hoarse voice, "Don't cry out! Ma thinks I'm in bed! But go down and save Enid!"

"Save Enid! From what!" cries the beautiful Corsican, springing up, her eyes brightening at the thought of danger to one she loves.

"From that fearful Mr. Barnes! He's making her cry behind the olive trees on the terrace!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that he's engaged to her! It's awful! I—I—" (the child is panting from excitement)—"I had never seen a girl asked to marry before—I knew he was up to it; and so, instead of going to bed, I—I sneaked down the other way and followed him, and oh! they frightened me!"

At this, Marina laughs a little, and then sighs.

"When I first saw them, from behind some rose-bushes, he was a little way from her, and she was shooting such flashes from her eyes at him that I thought she would frighten him away. But he is very brave, he is, and he came near to her and said three words, 'I love you!' and they nearly knocked her down; for she got all limp and would have fallen, but he caught her and held her to him. And then she began to say, How he astonished her!—which was not true—and he whispered something I couldn't catch, but it seemed to knock her out of time, and she sneaked at him just one look that seemed to set him crazy."

"And Enid said nothing?" asks Marina, excitedly.

"How could she open her lips when he was kissing her so? Then he asked her something about a month, and she cried, 'Oh, no! not so soon!' And then he said, 'Two months!' And she said, 'Do as you will; you have robbed me of my heart—only don't break it by giving it

back to me!' I learnt that last sentence coming up here—I thought it would be nice to say myself, some day!"

But here Marina suddenly quiets the loquacious Maud with this astounding invective, "Not another word, you miserable one. You have desecrated with your eyes the holy mystery of a woman's life, and *told me of it.*"

"I—er—thought you wanted to hear. Why, you were pumping me."

"Of such a secret? Never. Get to your apartment, and if I see your face again to-day your mother shall know of your atrocity. Away." And she sends the infant prodigy sobbing to bed with a fierce glance of her Corsican eyes and a majestic wave of her hand.

Marina has a woman's curiosity and a woman's conscience; Maud had tempted her curiosity, and she did eat, but, having gorged herself, conscience reigned in her once more, and she turned upon the creature who had tempted her, as Eve, the first woman, did upon the serpent.

The child's last sob having vanished in the distance. Marina sheds a little tear herself. Her eyes are still red from this exercise when Miss Anstruther walks coolly in; though there is a blush on her face, and her hair is a little out of trim, as she says, "Why did you not come with me for my walk after breakfast?"

"So you went alone?" asks Marina, gazing at her curiously.

"Yes; but at the last, Burton—I mean, Mr. Barnes—took pity on my loneliness, and—why do you look at me so? Heavens! who's been telling you?" This last is given almost hysterically.

"Maud!"

"Maud? How did she know?"

"She saw!"

"Great Heavens! She did not see him kiss——? Oh, Marina. I—that fearful child. I must find her! She'll tell the hotel. Oh, what shall I do?"

Tears of mortification and shame are in Enid's eyes; she is about to run from the room to seize upon this female Peeping Tom and bribe her with kindness or terrify her with threats, when Marina puts her arm round her and says, "I've silenced Maud—she's in bed for all day, and now tell me—you love him, *Carissima?*"

"Love him? Do you suppose I'd marry him in two months if I didn't!"

"Two months would be a long time for me to wait, if I were you."

"Yes. You're a Corsican; you'd marry him in a month, as he wanted me to do—you'd be as impetuous as he—you'd suit him." With this Miss Anstruther gives her a second-hand kiss of Mr. Barnes, saying, "I have to leave you now; I must write a letter telling my brother. Oh, how shall I do it? It is an awful thing to be engaged," and runs away.

Meantime Mr. Barnes has walked up and demanded the attention of Lady Chartris, and got it, from the very depths of her soul.

"My dear Madam," he opens, "would you do me a favour; just write to Lord Ferris—you know where he is at present?"

"Yes," murmurs the matron, "He is in Nice to-day, to-morrow he will be here."

"Precisely," continues the American; "write to him in Nice, and incidentally mention in your letter, in a sort of casual, off-hand manner, that Enid is engaged to marry me."

"Engaged to marry *you?*" Lady Chartris repeats these words after him in a scream of astonishment.

"Yes, to be married within two months."

"Within two months?"

"I thought it just as well that Lord Ferris knew it, as it might save Enid some embarrassment, and that gentleman a useless journey, with disappointment at the end of it; besides, it was a duty to you as Miss Anstruther's chaperon to tell you at once."

"And Enid preferred you to a nobleman?" gasps Lady Chartris, for a nobleman is a big thing in her eyes, as her dead husband had only been a knight.

"She had that peculiar taste."

"Very well. I presume you have enough to support her in the style in which she has been accustomed to live? You will excuse my asking the question, but Enid is very young, and I feel responsible to her brother for her not making a mistake under my charge."

"Certainly!" says Barnes. "You have a perfect right to be answered on that point!"

"Very well!" Here Lady Chartris becomes grandly important; "What are your expectations?"

"Expectations? Ah!—oh, of money, I suppose you mean—I haven't any!"

"No expectations? And you come here to marry a girl that was the belle of the last London season—whose family is one of the oldest in England, and who might make a grand match!"

"I've something better than expectations, I've the *cash!*" says Barnes, slowly.

"What is your income?" says the matron curiously.

"About sixty thousand a year!"

"*Pounds?*" almost screams Lady Chartris.

"No! only dollars, I am sorry to say—but it's enough!"

"Enough! I should say it was. Well, Burton—I suppose I must call you Burton now—you know Enid is my cousin; you've got the best girl in England, and I hope you'll make her happy. Sixty thousand dollars—that's twelve thousand pounds a year!—of course you'll make her happy. If I wasn't so young I'd kiss you; but it might make your *fiancée* jealous!" and she shakes his hand very cordially.

Mr. Barnes is well pleased that Lady Chartris is too young to kiss him, but it sets him to thinking of his betrothed, and he says, "Lady Chartris, would you be kind enough to send Enid to me, here, and give us the use of your parlour for a little time? I wish to speak to her on a matter of business."

"Of course—on a matter of business?" and the frisky widow gives a little laugh.

"Yes!" echoes Barnes sternly, "*Business!* I want to tell her we have your consent!"

This deference to her authority makes Lady Chartris his ally at once, and she says, "You can have my parlour as long as you want, dear Mr. Barnes!" then goes off to do his bidding.

As he waits the coming of his love, that gentleman reflects that having got his own affair pretty well in hand, he had better settle his doubts with regard to Enid's brother, and goes to speculating on that mystery.

His reverie is disturbed by a small hand being laid upon his arm, and a soft voice whispering, "What do you want me for?"

He imprisons the hand, asking, "Have you the letter written for your brother?"

"Yes—here it is," and Miss Anstruther hands it to him.

"I sent mine off half an hour ago," remarks Barnes, "for we've got to be rushing things!" He rings the bell and gives the epistle to the servant to post.

"And now I suppose that is all—Burton?"

It is the first time she has ever called him by his Christian name; though the girl blushes and hesitates, she lingers over it as if she loves it, yet, having said it, turns bashfully, and makes a show of going to the door.

"Not by a great deal!" cries Barnes, catching her in retreat.

"No?"

"First," he laughs a little, "tell me why you stammered so over my name—don't you like it?"

"Oh, what makes you ask such question? Don't you know it was the first time—Burton?" here she gives a tremendous blush.

"Yes—you said it much better the second time," says he, meditatively.

"Do you know that Lady Chartris has lent me this parlour for an hour, and you're to spend the whole of it here?"

"As I am to be your slave in two months, I presume I'd better learn obedience at once." She says this with a very resigned expression, and permits him to seat her on the sofa beside him.

"And now I wish to speak to you very seriously, Enid."

Here her eyes open in astonishment, as she turns them on him in a pathetic way that sets his heart beating, and cries, "Speak to me seriously! I?—what have I done? You're—you're not going to scold me! Oh, you must have enchanted me!—I, who but yesterday was proud—I—oh, if you ever treat me unkindly!"

Now this kind of mood requires consolation, and after Barnes has consoled his *fiancée*, until they are both in the seventh Heaven of happiness, he remarks, "*Apropos* of obedience, I want to ask you a very serious question!"

"Yes!"

"I want you to tell me what you meant by making love to a man in Marina's picture at Paris, and then saying it was a ruse?" He asks this with intense earnestness, and receives a scream of laughter for reply.

After a minute Miss Anstruther manages to gasp, "Why, you're jealous of that creature on canvas!"

"Not a bit; but all the same, I've a curiosity to know."

"Well, Mrs. Vavassour was teasing me about my—my affection for a certain gentleman—Lord—you know—'the other one.' He's her nephew, and as she is a most persistent woman, I stopped her by telling her my heart was gone, selected the most harmless individual I could find to throw away my affections upon, and it was the ugly man of the canvas."

"Was that *all?*"

"Oh! now you *are* jealous. This is delightful! Do you know that at times," here she looks at Barnes closely, "you rather remind me of him?"

"Much obliged for your kind compliment. May I ask you another question?"

"What, not satisfied; still jealous? I'm afraid you will be my Bluebeard!"

"No, I am not jealous. Some day you'll know that I could not be jealous of *him!* But you were interested in the picture before that. What made you so?"

The laughter leaves Enid's face; she hesitates a moment, and then says, "I know I ought to have no secrets from you, Burton, but it is not my secret; it is another's."

"Very well, tell me what you can without compromising anyone," says Mr. Barnes. "Believe me, I don't ask without a reason."

"What reason?" asks Miss Anstruther, who has now become curious herself.

Here the gentleman encounters her with, "I know I ought to have no secrets from you, Enid, but it is not my secret; it is another's."

"Ah!" cries the young lady, "a secret; tell me all about it."

"First answer my question."

"Well, it was a letter from Egypt that interested me in the picture. It described a duel, with a lucky penny episode in it, something like the one on the canvas; but the encounter in my letter did not end fatally for either combatant."

"The letter came from your brother, I suppose?"

"I—you see, I hardly like to tell you."

"Oh! then it did not come from your brother; from some other man, I've no doubt?"

"Yes, it did come from my brother, you jealous creature," says Miss Anstruther, with a little laugh.

"Do you know the principal of the duel?"

"No; Edwin did not tell me. In fact, he asked me to say nothing about the affair, as, if it were known, it would bring the officer to a court-martial. You know, he couldn't get his comrade into a scrape."

"Of course not."

"And now, why do you want to know?"

"I was jealous," says Barnes, telling a story, for he is now more than ever certain that his suspicions in regard to Edwin Anstruther are correct, but he feels he cannot tell Enid her brother has the blood of a fellow creature on his soul, and decides in his mind that Edwin and Marina must never meet again.

"Jealous!" says the girl. "Jealous, first of a canvas man, then of a man in a letter. Oh! what a life I shall lead you. Don't you know I'm a flirt?"

"I've no doubt you used to be, but now," replies Barnes, attempting an Othello expression of the face, "you have reformed."

"Perhaps," remarks Enid. "I haven't got tired of you yet. I've only known you a week."

"Yes, just a week ago you were cutting me in the most severe manner in the railway train between Paris and Tonnerre," says Barnes, looking at his watch.

"A week ago I didn't know you, and yet was happy; now, if I didn't know you, life would be a blank to me."

"Oh! there would still be 'the other one,'" laughs Barnes, airily.

At this he receives a glance of such reproach from Enid's eyes, that he feels he owes her reparation; and there takes place between them a little poem of sentiment at which cynics would sneer, but that they enjoy so thoroughly that Lady Chartris finds Mr. Barnes' business interview with his *fiancée* a very long one.

A week, shortened by happiness, soon flies round for these two lovers, when returning one evening from a drive with Miss Anstruther, Mr. Barnes finds waiting for him a letter from that young lady's brother. The minute he opens it he knows that it has been written by a thoroughly nice fellow. The communication reads as follows:

"H. M. S. *Sealark*.
"Gibraltar, May 14, 1883.

"My Dear Barnes,

"You ask my consent to your marriage with my sister. I grant it for these reasons: First, her letter to me of the same date says that she is in love with you, and that you are the one man in the world that can make her happy—which is all I ask, as she is very dear to me. Second, if you approach reasonably near to the idea of manly perfection that I know Enid holds, in regard to the being worthy to be her mate, you must be a very fine fellow, and, I am sure, I shall be pleased with you when I meet you, which will be in England in about two weeks, as the *Sealark* is ordered home.

"Now, in regard to business: Enid has £20,000 settled on her. I am sure you will wish this settlement to remain unbroken.

"I have no objection to my sister marrying an American who is rich enough to visit England with her; and, from your statement of your means, you and she will be able to live pretty well, how, and where you please.

"The financial arrangements you propose are more generous than I or my sister ought to expect or ask. As your letter indicates that you both are apparently anxious to sail in company as soon as possible, you had better, on receipt of this, leave at once for London, and there see H. Mortimer, Solicitor, No. 14, Cornhill. He has been our family man of business for a generation

or more; I have written to him in regard to you, and any settlement satisfactory to him will be the same to me. Enid will return to England under the charge of Lady Chartris, who, I believe, goes home in about three weeks.

"Wishing you all happiness, and congratulating you on having won the best girl in all England and the dearest of sisters to me, I am,

"Yours most affectionately,

"EDWIN G. ANSTRUTHER."

This letter is exactly what Mr. Barnes wishes. He takes it to his lady-love, and hands it to her without comment. As she reads she says impulsively, "The dear fellow!" and then after a pause of consideration, "You notice he takes it for granted that you are worthy of me; I think he must have met you before."

This is precisely what has been in Barnes' modest mind also. "I agree with you. I suppose you've lots of his pictures in England."

"Yes!"

"Tell me where I'll find one—so I may know if you are correct."

"You are awfully impatient, but if you are at Beechwood, look in the large photograph album in the drawing-room, and you'll find his face the third picture in the book."

"Very well; I'm going to England to-morrow, I'll have a look at him."

"To-morrow!" Miss Anstruther gives a gasp.

"Yes, I've got no time to lose; only six weeks to our wedding!" he replies with a longing look that makes the young lady blush.

"Then this is our last evening together—for two weeks," the girl says despondingly.

"I suppose you couldn't get Lady Chartris to come on at once?" suggests Barnes, eagerly.

"I'll try," cried Enid, and runs off, but shortly returns pouting, and mutters, with a sigh, "The selfish thing! She doesn't want to go home till the first of June; she has painters and plumber in her house."

"Well, I don't blame her for fleeing from plumbers," laughs Barnes, "so let's make the best of our evening on the terrace." And the two wander off.

The thought of his leaving her makes his sweetheart even more tender than she has ever been before. She entrances Mr. Barnes with one or two little views of the inner sanctuary of her heart; and on parting says, "I am to meet you to-morrow at breakfast, so I shan't say good-bye!"—but as he takes her in his arms to kiss her, she gives him a sensation. Enid Anstruther has permitted his caresses ever since she accepted his love; still, up to this moment, she had never kissed *him;* and now with a great rush of tender passion, she places two fairy lips upon his, then breaks from his arms, runs upstairs and disappears, leaving Mr. Barnes alone on the balcony in such a blissful state of mind that for five minutes he hesitates to destroy the remembrance of that kiss by desecrating his own lips with a cigar.

He has hardly done this, however, when two great passionate eyes glare at him in the darkness, and a soft, southern voice, made hoarse by anger, whispers in his ear, "You cruel one!"

"I—I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle Paoli," he says, with a start, "I scarcely understand you!"

"But you shall! You have stolen from me my friend. I never see Enid now! You have caused her to desert me when I am alone and desolate!"

This accusation was true. Mr. Barnes has prevented Miss Anstruther giving Marina during the past week more than a few hasty words. He has diplomatically arranged his *fiancée's* days so that the two girls come but little together; for though he has said nothing to Enid, he has feared an intimacy that might lead to Marina's once more meeting Edwin Anstruther.

Before he can answer, the Corsican bursts out again: "Is it because I am not worthy to associate with your northern love? Would I do her a harm because I am unhappy? Have I ever said anything but good of you? Or do you look upon me as one accursed because I have that vow upon my soul?"

The American considers a moment, and then says, slowly, "While you have the passions of an assassin, you are not worthy to associate with the woman that is to be my wife. Your brother's last wish upon earth was, that his death should not ruin your life. You are better fitted to love and be blessed, than to hate and be accursed!"

"God knows," she murmurs, "how I have tried to think as you do. How I have watched you and your dear one, who love and are so happy, as a lost spirit has looked on a Paradise that she can never enter. You are one of the blessed; be merciful to me an outcast, and do not rob me of the only friend I have on earth!"

"You have Danella!" says Barnes, shortly; for the girl's despair and loneli-

ness affect him, and he is anxious to end the interview.

"Danella!" cries the girl. "That devil whose one hope is my despair. He who knows that not until I have no other refuge upon earth will I turn to him and his love! I cannot understand him! I loathe him! I dread him!" Her voice is tremulous with some unknown fear, and her beautiful form shudders with apprehension.

"Then let me advise you," says Barnes, more tenderly, for no man could look on such despairing loveliness unmoved, "to destroy Danella's hope at once, by giving up a pursuit in which success means greater misery than failure!"

"Ah! You would have me go back to my dear native island to be the scorn of my neighbours; to have them sing the *Rimbecco* to me; to hear them cry, 'A Paoli has forgotten she is a Corsican! Her brother is murdered, and his slayer lives!' No! no! I could not endure that! Go your way! I will go mine! Your northern lily shall not be sullied by contact with a woman who has murder in her heart!" And she leaves him proudly: but, on getting from his sight, begins to pant with despair, and finally, staggering to her room, finds a telegram waiting for her, that reads:

"You may have hope!
"Danella."

"Hope! there is no hope for me! Others may love and be happy, but I, who hate, am accursed!" cries the girl, and she throws herself down, and struggles and writhes in an agony of despair, until sleep, which is kind to those who suffer, comes to her and gives her peace.

CHAPTER XV.

AT LAST!

LEAVING by the morning train necessitates an early breakfast; but Mr. Barnes finds Miss Anstruther at the table before him, looking very pretty, but somewhat out of her usual good temper. "See!" she cries, "misfortunes never come singly; you are going away from me, and Marina sends me this!" as she exhibits a little three-cornered note.

"Well, what does it contain?"

"Awful news!"

"Awful news?" Barnes' face lengthens.

"Two days ago when I asked her to be one of my bridesmaids, she promised to come to dear old England and see the last of Enid Anstruther; now she sends me this, which tells me that she will be unable to accept my invitation. That's awful news, isn't it?" says Enid, with a little pout.

"Oh! that's the matter!" answers Barnes, quite relieved, thinking of the narrow escape Marina has had of meeting Edwin again, and blessing last night's interview for what it had brought about this morning. He is too wise, however, to express this view to Enid, who would have given him a pretty battle if she had guessed that to him she owed her friend's refusal; so, noticing the troubled expression on his *fiancée's* face, he continues, rather nonchalantly, "Don't you know some girl in England that will act in her place?"

"The idea! Of course I know hundreds; but I wanted *her!* You look as if you were rather pleased than otherwise. How would you like to be disappointed after you'd been promised? How would you feel if I changed my mind in regard to being the bride? Do you know some girl in England that would act in *my* place?" echoes Enid in superb scorn.

Now, there is only one way to answer his *fiancée's* question, and Barnes does this so much to her satisfaction that Marina is soon forgotten in the pleasant misery of saying good-bye. Miss Anstruther goes with him to the railway station; and, though she has promised herself to act the Spartan maiden, at the last moment forgets her resolution, and favours her lover with some most pathetic tears, that glisten in her bright blue eyes like dew upon morning violets; then tells him that she has a presentiment that they may never meet again, which overcomes her, and after glancing about—the compartment being empty—she throws all pride away, and,

giving him a hurried kiss, whispers, "My own! If we were only married that I might never leave you!" pressing something in his hand, by which he is to remember her; and so sends him away sad, but also proud and happy, looking at her gift, which is a locket containing his sweetheart's face and a lock of her sunny hair.

Mr. Barnes, as soon as he has seen the last of her, proceeds to take an inventory of all he has left of the two brightest weeks of his life, and finds it consists of a little glove he has stolen from her; a pocket-handkerchief, likewise purloined; a few flowers, faded and dead; the locket, with its enclosed treasure, and Miss Anstruther's heart, love and promise. And in return for this he has given all he has upon earth, himself included, and is proud of his bargain; though a month ago he would have jeered the person who would have told him that there was any higher happiness than the careless, easy bachelor life that he has led up to the day he met Enid Anstruther. He communes thus with himself till the train runs past Nice, and he finds himself thinking, "At this station she was thirsty, and I got her a glass of water! That was the room where we had breakfast in the morning!" At Lyons he comes across the guard who had starved his angel, and astonishes that worthy by giving him a hundred francs. So his journey is one pleasant reminiscence until he passes Paris, and here it changes to a hope of soon seeing her in London, and being happy ever afterwards.

Miss Anstruther returns to her hotel in a discontented, erratic mood that produces some very unpleasant results for those she chooses to honour with her company.

The first unfortunate she falls upon is Maud. That young lady rushes to her fate in the most reckless manner; for, no sooner does she see Enid in her own room, than she flies after her and whispers in her ear, "It's lucky he's gone!"

"Lucky he's gone? What do you mean?"

"Why, Enid, don't you know she was trying to get him away from you!"

"She? Who?"

"Why, that foreign cat, Marina, of course!" returns Maud, who has hated the beautiful Corsican with all a child's detestation of those who are unjust to them, ever since she had obtained from her the details of Enid's engagement, and then made her go to bed for having delivered up her secret.

"Marina? Impossible!" screams Miss Anstruther.

"Yes! you don't know her; she's *so* deceitful she makes you think she loves you—but she loves *him!*"

"What! does she dare?" hisses Miss Anstruther, and her face takes a cruel expression at the thought that Marina could be guilty of an iniquity in which she has been indulging, *i.e.*, the fearful crime of loving Barnes.

"Oh! she dares anything; she is a plotter—she gets telegrams!"

Telegrams have a wonderfully mysterious conspiritorial signification to Maud. After a little pause, to give full weight to this portentous declaration, Miss Chartris goes on, "If she didn't love him, why did she make me go to bed when I told her you were engaged to him? She was angry, of course! Then, last night, I was downstairs trying to find a bracelet of ma's I had borrowed and lost, and I saw her watching you two making love, with the look of a fiend—her eyes were so big! And when you had left, she sneaked out to him, and they had a fearful time; and afterwards I heard her sobbing as if her heart would break; and though I didn't see him kiss her, you'd better look after Mr. Barnes, of New York. Oh, Enid! Don't kill me!" This last is a scream of abject terror, for Miss Anstruther has seized her by the shoulders, and is darting at her a glance that might have come from Boadicea after she had passed under the Roman rods.

All might have been well for the luckless Maud had she not indulged in that last insinuation in regard to the absent Barnes; but now, there is no mercy in Enid for the girl who has tortured her. "That!" she cries, "for trying to break my heart! And that, for telling stories about him!—and now, having made me miserable, please go away!" an invitation that Maud is happy to accept, as each of the "thats" has been a shake of such hysterical vigour that her teeth almost rattle in her head.

She rushes from the room, and, after drying her eyes, groans, "What is the matter? Enid used to have a nice temper! Well! when I'm in love, if my younger sister tells me anything about him, I suppose I shall murder her! All the same, I shall keep myself to myself after this, and I think I know a way of getting even with Enid! *Wait!*" for Miss Chartris, in all her misfortunes, is a philosopher.

As for Enid, she sobs a little, then tries

to read a novel that unfortunately contains a female Judas; and this works on her mind to such a degree that, having no better occupation, she thinks she might just as well go and have it out with Marina on the bridesmaid question—for all this time she will never admit to herself that she believes a word of what Maud has told her.

Arriving at the Corsican's apartments, she is astonished to find old Tomasso, apparently greatly excited, engaged in packing his mistress's baggage, and preparing for her departure. His expressive face, that looks like an etching from a fourteenth-century picture, is wrinkled by smiles, as he mutters to himself, "God is merciful! I shall live to see Antonio avenged!" for Marina has just been reading to him this telegram from Gibraltar:

"I am almost certain I have found him. Meet me in Nice not later than the day after to-morrow.
"DANELLA."

Marina receives the English girl very coldly, but gives Tomasso an errand that takes him from the room.

"You are going?" says Enid, "and you did not tell me." She can't help wondering, "Is it because Barnes has left that Marina goes also?"

"Yes," replies the young lady addressed, "I have received a telegram that takes me suddenly away from Monte Carlo on business. I intended, however, to bid you good-bye before I went."

"And it is this business that prevents your being my bridesmaid?"

"Yes."

"But my wedding is six weeks off—your business will be finished by that time?"

"I hope so; but if it is, I shall be unable still to accept your offer!" This is said coldly, but with a very sad sigh.

Enid is certain it is one of regret—perhaps for Barnes? For a moment she is jealous; but, as she looks on Marina and sees the hopeless misery of this beautiful woman, to whose lonely lot she has perhaps added its most cruel pang, there is only pity in her voice as she replies, "I am exceedingly sorry to lose your presence at my wedding, but perhaps it is better thus."

"You are glad I refused you?" whispers Marina, giving her a reproachful glance. Then, seeing a slight suspicion of haughtiness in Enid's manner, for, though she strives to conceal it, the thought will return to Miss Anstruther that her friend is in love with her *fiancé*, the Corsican suddenly cries, "Why do you look at me so coldly? Ah! he has told you!"

"He! Who?" returns Enid, drawing away from Marina, whose hand is placed appealingly on her arm.

"Signor Barnes! Heaven! you despise me!"

These astounding words are very bitter to the English girl; they tell her that there is a secret between her lover and Marina, one in which she has no part, one that the Corsican fears that she may know. She looks at the almost perfect beauty before her, and is at last thoroughly jealous. Though she forces herself to be calm, her voice is cold and haughty as she says, "I do not despise you. I am only sorry you have so little self-control. We English girls do not expose our passion to our rivals. I have the honour to wish you adieu, Mademoiselle Paoli!"

She turns to leave the room, but Marina cries, "*Rival!*" strides up to her, seizes her hand, and says, resolutely, "Not yet! Not till you have explained that word!"

"I beg of you not to insist upon an explanation!"

"I have as much pride as you. I insist!"

"Very well, since you force me, I will. You, yourself, are in love with my affianced husband!"

As the English girl says this with a very angry but contemptuous glance, the Corsican opens her great eyes in surprise, gives a little laugh that is almost a sneer, and cries, "In love? With *him?*"

"Don't you dare to deny it in that way!" returns Enid very savagely. "Oh! I thought you were too noble to love a man, and then sneer at him behind his back!"

"Love *him?* You must be crazy!"

"No! it is you who are crazy—you treat me coldly because I love him; you look at us when we are happy as if you envied us!"

"And so I do!" with this Marina gives a sigh so piteous that it would conquer any one but a jealous woman.

"Ah! you confess! You followed him last night; you came to him and begged for his love, and when you could not with your beautiful false eyes and pathetic southern graces win his true heart from me, you came up here and cried in agony!"

"And he told you that *lie?*"

"He? Burton? Never! He said no-

thing; he is too noble to disclose a woman's humiliation. But I know it all the same!"

"Stop!" cries Marina in an awful voice.

But Enid Anstruther comes of a race who have stood and died in their sturdy northern way against many a wild charge of southern chivalry; she is no more to be stopped than her ancestors were at Crecy or Agincourt, or later on at Ramilies or Waterloo, and she goes on, "Oh! how can you look at me so boldly after your treachery to me? when I loved you so because you'd saved my brother for me! Why don't you blush and be ashamed and fall on your knees and ask my pardon, and then I might forgive you, because it is hard to keep from loving him!—Ah! now you are softening—now you repent!" for the mention of Enid's brother has made Marina tremble and her eyes fill with tears.

"Stop!" the Corsican cries, "Give me justice—you cold, phlegmatic northern people always boast that you give justice! Listen, and give the same to me—I love!"

"A-ah!" this is a sniff of anger from Enid.

"I love—not the man you say I do, but another! As well, perhaps even better, than you; but I love without hope!"

"Without hope? Oh! how terrible!" murmurs Enid, who, within a second has changed from an avenging woman into a sympathizing one. "Can it be possible he does not love you in return?"

"I do not know. I *dare* not know; I thought for one sweet moment that perchance he might, and then I fled from him because I had a vow upon my soul that would make it an infamy in me to let any man love me!"

"A vow!—oh yes, you are going to be a nun!"

At this Marina gives a most unholy laugh and says, "No! mine is rather a vow to Hell than a vow to Heaven! It was this of which Mr. Barnes spoke to me last night; he said, while I had an assassin's passion in my heart and an assassin's oath upon my conscience, I was not worthy to associate with you!"

"Ah! you are a Nihilist?" says Miss Anstruther eagerly, and then having awful visions of Marina in subterranean dungeons undergoing the knout, she gasps, "Give it up—for my sake!"

"No! I'm not a fanatic!" replies the Corsican in scorn, for she thinks her vow a perfectly natural one; such is the force of habit and association.

"But you yourself acknowledge your oath is a wicked one. Turn from it and be happy, dear one!" and a pair of soft arms go round Marina.

But she shakes them off and cries, "No! no! for the love of Heaven don't *you* tempt me! I have so longed to put it from me and be like other women! But sometimes I think I am sworn to a holy mission; and then I pant to meet him that I may do my duty!" This last is uttered as if she were inspired, but not from God.

After a pause Enid says, "And Mr. Barnes caused you to write me this note?"

"Yes!"

"You poor darling!" Here Miss Anstruther's arms again surround the Corsican girl, and this time they conquer her and stay about her. "How cruel he was to you! He did not think you should be the companion of his angel who loves you. But consent to be my bridesmaid and I'll show him I'm not all angel! for I'll fight for you! Promise—dear one!"

But Marina says determinedly, "Never! I cannot put away my vow!" Your lover is right; you are too good for me; but though I shall not see you a bride—I shall always love you because of—of your kindness to me when no friends were near. But I am going away and you may never see me again—and—!"

Here two girls cry over each other.

They are interrupted by Miss Chartris, who calls through the door, "*He's* come back again, Enid!"

"He? Who?" cries Miss Anstruther, springing up. Then she says, "I will see you before you go, dear one!" gives Marina another kiss, and darts out with a beating heart, thinking that for some unknown reasons Mr. Barnes has returned to her.

She pursues Maud Chartris to the door of her mother's parlour; where that young lady, turning to Enid, whispers, "He's in there alone, waiting to clasp you in his arms!" and gives her a playful little laugh.

Miss Anstruther opens the door; and, the blinds being drawn on account of the hot sun, sees sitting in the shadow, with his back to her, a man she imagines to be Mr. Barnes.

She darts upon him softly, puts her arms about his neck, whispers in his ear, "Burton, darling, you couldn't leave me, could you!" gives him a most delicious kiss, and then starts back with a scream of

dismay; for a great bearded creature, who has returned her kiss very cordially, says, with a laugh, "So 'Burton, darling,' has gone away, has he?"

Here Enid gives another cry, "Edwin! My brother!" and flies at him, not so bashfully this time, with many affectionate kisses, though they are scarcely so tender as the one intended for "Burton, darling."

Edwin Gerard Anstruther is a worthy type of the manhood that has supported the British flag against all kinds of odds, in all kinds of climates, in all sorts of perils, for so many generations by land and by sea; and who have generally given their country little cause to regret what has come to her honour or her safety at their hands.

He is a brave, educated young Englishman, and though Enid looks upon him as almost a paragon among men, she is nearer right than the generality of sisters are in regard to their brothers' virtues.

He is not quite so fair as Miss Anstruther; perhaps because he has passed so much of his life exposed to the wind and sun. There is a frank look in his eyes and a noble bearing in his figure that makes one take kindly to him at once. His smile, curiously enough in so young a man, is not so merry as it should be.

Enid notices this, and, their first greeting being over, says, "Edwin, is anything the matter with you? When we were in Nice I did not speak of it, because our half hour was so short; but now, what has become of your laugh?"

"My laugh! didn't you hear it when you mistook me for 'Burton, darling'?"

"Yes—but your old laugh—the one that used to tell me you were happy?"

"Oh! I'm afraid I left that behind in Egypt."

"In Egypt?"

"Yes! A man can't see suffering, misery, war and death all about him, and for ever be a boy, and have a boy's freedom from the cares and sorrows of life! However, I am pretty much my old self again now! And you!"—here he draws her to the light and looks at her in a critical way, "How does being in love agree with you, Enid?"

"Pretty well, thank you," says the young lady very demurely, but giving a big blush.

"Yes. I see it brings a nice colour to your cheeks."

At this Miss Anstruther checks him with, "How and why did you come here?"

"First, to see you and 'Burton, darling.' Second, because I fortunately got leave and thought it would be pleasanter to return with you both to England by rail, than knocking about for two weeks more on shipboard."

Here sudden joy comes over Enid, and she cries, "Oh, how magnificent! He is but one day ahead of us. We will leave to-morrow and I shall see him in forty-eight hours."

"All right, and the sooner the better," says the sailor; "I suppose 'Burton, darling,' will not be sorry either. What a wonderfully tender kiss that first one you gave me was, Enid!"

"Tease me as much as you like about 'Burton, darling,' only take me to him," says Miss Anstruther. "But if we leave to-morrow I must see that my maid packs, and tell Lady Chartris. You'll excuse me for a little while, Edwin, you can run over to the Casino and kill time for an hour, you dearest of brothers." With that she runs off on her errand, thinking to herself, "Only two days and I shall be with him once more," and trembles with expectant happiness.

Her brother looks after her, and mutters, "Love has made her a new girl," and then, with a kind of weary sigh, "and me a new man." And, after a few moments' rather glum consultation with himself, suddenly cries, "What's the use? I might as well knock what enjoyment I can out of life," lights a cigar and wanders out of the hotel into the Casino gardens, where he lounges about in a listless, heedless sort of way, not even giving much attention to several pretty girls that pass by him in the light, graceful summer toilets appropriate to Monaco in May.

He gets to the terrace, sniffs the sea-breeze, sits down and goes to day-dreaming again. Soon his eyes, that have been wandering absently about, fix themselves on a young lady who is standing at some distance from him, looking out over the Mediterranean, her beautiful form drooping like a lily crushed by the storm. The helpless, hopeless misery in her attitude attracts his notice, and he mutters to himself, "Poor devil! Jove! she looks more down in the mouth than I do." The next instant, he starts, and stares at her, his whole soul in his eyes. His strong limbs tremble for a moment, but his strong will forces them to do their office; he rises, and going near to her, whispers in a voice tremulous with hope and love, "Marina. *At last!*"

CHAPTER XVI

LOVE'S BATTLE.

THERE are some joys so glorious they can hardly be imagined.

As the girl turns her face towards this man even the world seems to change to her and become another and a brighter one. The sea that was sombre sparkles in the sun's rays, the sky that was leaden is as blue and clear as painters give to that of Italy; and the modern garden with its light, frivolous loungers and gaudily decked women, its earthly orchestra playing a French melody, is as Eden with celestial choirs singing a pæan of joy.

This feeling comes into her face and makes it very beautiful.

Anstruther gazes at her with a look of amazed admiration, and cries, "You are happy to see me."

"Happy, Gerard?" The first is a cry of astonished ecstasy; the last ends in a sigh of abject misery. The light fades from her face, the world becomes a world of gloom once more, for Marina feels that the presence of this man (who could, but whom she has decreed shall not make her happy) will but add to the agony of her struggle and her despair.

She falters, trembles, and almost falls; giving a golden opportunity for coming on good terms with her at once—of which Barnes would have taken advantage, and bestowed upon her tempting waist a delicate pressure that would have done his battle no harm; but Edwin, who has been at sea a great portion of his time, and has that immense respect that all good men have for women, until they know them well enough to discover that Eve is hidden in most of them, lets his chance go by, and merely says, "Forgive me, I have startled you."

For a moment she does not reply to this, and he stands inactive and lets this volcanic creature cover her raging fire with a little glacial ice; until she can utter slowly but coolly, "You surprised me at first!—Alexandria and Monte Carlo are so far apart.—I had forgotten you English are such travellers. You came to see your sister, I presume, Monsieur An-stru-ther!" She struggles a little with the last word, as if she had pronounced it seldom.

'You make bad work of my family name," he says. "Won't you come back to old times and the old name?"

"The old name?"

"Yes; the one you used to call me by when you came each morning to the Egyptian hospital to see I was not dead! The one you uttered when you first saw me here!—Gerard!"

Mr. Anstruther has steadied himself and is now doing good work. He has made up his mind to fight a great square, honest battle for the happiness of his life; and, though it will not have the delicate touches and quaint skill of fence with which Mr. Barnes would have embellished it, still it is a kind of attack that always wins where a woman loves; and, in this case, it would be a dashing victory in one round, but for the girl having grown to regard her oath of vengeance on her brother's slayer as a sort of holy mission for which she must, like the palmer of old, give up home and friends, and even love and happiness.

He gains a little advantage from his speech. The remembrance of Egypt melts some of the artificial ice the girl has put about her. She answers, "Yes—Gerard! I remember!" holds out a tiny hand which he clasps and when she would withdraw it, has sense enough to clasp it tighter. His touch overcomes her; her head droops.

"Now I can tell you, Marina, as in those happy days in Alexandria!" he whispers.

Here a sudden resolution comes to the Corsican; she will again flee from this man who will make her forget her oath. She raises her head, though there are tears in her eyes, looks him fairly in the face and manages to say! "You must let me go. I have the afternoon train to take; I am leaving Monte Carlo!"

"What? When I have just found you, after seeking for you a year!"

"I must!"

"Very well!" he replies sadly, relinquishing her hand, "I am afraid my coming has driven you away?"

"Oh! Don't say that!—Good-bye!"

She turns and gets a little way from him. He has not answered her adieu—he thinks her cruel to him; she falters and turns to have one more look at the being she adores, but flies from. This look is

her undoing. Edwin, gazing after her as one does upon his last dying hope, sees, within her eyes, something that makes hope live. The next instant he is at her side again.

"Won't you say good-bye to me?" she falters.

"No!"

"No?"

"No! *For I am going with you!*" This is a tender touch worthy of Barnes.

With these words come to Marina visions of Danella plotting with her the murder, and this man discovering it; this man who has been educated to despise an assassin; this man whose good opinion is more to her than all the world's.

"No! no!" she cries, "you must leave me."

"Not till you have heard me!"

"As you are a gentleman, you must go!"

"As I am a man fighting for my happiness, nor till you have answered my question!"

"As you will! What is it?" she says, forcing herself to be calm; then, looks at the gloom of the evening that is beginning to make the garden dark, and murmurs, "I can give you ten minutes!"

"Ten seconds will be enough for me! I once hoped, prayed, thought that you loved me! Tell me, was I mistaken?"

She does not answer this; but, in her face, which is turned towards the earth, joy is conquering grief. Her beautiful features are flushed; her eyes are beginning to beam with a strange light; the volcano of her passions is on the eve of an eruption.

"Do you love me?" he goes on in rapid intensity. "Look me in the face and tell if you love me? Though it breaks my heart if you say no; if you even shake your head I will believe you. If you had not fled from me in Egypt I would have asked you then. Now, after I have sought for you so long, look me in the face, sweetheart, and tell me do you love me?"

The eruption takes place. The repressed passion of a year at last comes from her lips, "Do I love you, Gerard? Do I love you? I love you better than my soul."

She can say no more, for she is in the arms that she has nursed to strength, sobbing as if her heart would break.

Marina is now a miracle of tenderness. Being conquered by love she gives way to it with that charming abandon and those graceful arts of endearment peculiar to the women of the South. And so the minutes run along, until Anstruther murmurs in the delicate ear nestled against his cheek, for the hundredth time, "Do you love me?"

She whispers back, "You cannot doubt that now."

"Then, sweetheart, when will you marry me?"

At this she starts and struggles from his arms, and cries, in the voice of despair, "Never!"

"Never!" he echoes, with a pale face; "Never? and you love me!"

"I adore you better than my life, but I will never see your face on this earth again;" and with these astounding words she darts from him into the darkness.

For a second he is stunned, but the next instant follows and tries to find her, but in the gloom of the evening immediate pursuit is useless. He stands considering for a moment, then turns to a lamp and consults his watch. It is past the time of the outgoing train; until another departs she must remain in Monte Carlo. If she is at a villa she may baffle him; if she is at a hotel he will find her. He runs to the Casino and dispatches one of the servants of the house with Marina's name to discover if she is registered at any of the hotels. While the man is gone he stands thinking if this is not a dream, or the ravings of a disordered brain that has brooded too much over the girl who has filled his mind ever since she fled from him in Egypt. But no, the soft impress of her lips still lingers upon his; the perfume from her dress is still about him. Here another fear darts through his mind, "What if she should leave Monte Carlo by carriage!" He must send word to all the public stables to notify him if they receive an order from Mdlle. Paoli. He is just about to make such an arrangement when the servant brings him word that the young lady is registered at the Grand Hotel.

He rushes there and finds that Mdlle. Paoli has ordered a carriage to be ready to take her to Nice that night; a little more delay and he would have missed her.

He knows that his card will be refused and walks up to her apartments himself. He knocks at Marina's parlour door and there is no answer; then, listening, hears a subdued sound that makes him sigh. He raps again several times unanswered, and then calls through the panel, "Before you go I must see you."

After a moment a reply comes in Marina's

voice, "You may pursue me for ever, but you shall not look on me again."

"You will not open the door?"

"Never!"

"Very well, I shall wait in the hall until you come out, and speak to you then; and if you will not listen to me there I shall follow your carriage to Nice and demand an interview, and so on, till you or I die."

"Then I shall not leave my apartments till morning."

"In that case, I shall remain here all night to see that you do not escape me."

Here a piteous voice comes to him, "Gerard, why do you add to my misery? Go away! Leave me, I beg of you, as you are a gentleman!"

"As I am a man I stay here." He gets no further answer and stands waiting, for Edwin Anstruther, now that he knows his sweetheart loves him, is like a lion that has tasted blood and longs for more. It is fearfully tedious in the dreary hall, when there is but a little door that he could easily break down with his foot between him and the being for whose presence he hungers. But he is accustomed to taking his watch at night on shipboard, and he paces the corridor as he would his quarter-deck. And so an hour passes, when she, who is panting behind that door like a hunted creature in its lair, watching for the hound to tire in his vigil and leave her a pathway to escape, speaks to him again.

"You are still there! Gerard, have mercy, and let me go!"

"Not till I see you!"

"I cannot bear that you should make yourself unhappy for me in this cruel way. —Go, for God's sake!"

"For yours I will stay!"

His persistency tortures, nay, almost angers her. She will see him; she will crush any feeling of hope in this man who insists on pursuing her. In this resolution, Marina hurriedly throws over her deshabille (for she has been preparing to dress for her journey) a light morning robe, opens her parlour door, and cries, "Enter! Ask me what you will—and then—in mercy to me—go!"

"Then, in mercy to me, answer my questions!" and before her is a man whose passion, being now aroused, has all the fervour of the southern, but still retains the steadfast resolution of his northern, race—a man who may be made to despise her and so give her up, but who, as long as he thinks she loves him, can no more be shaken off by her than a deer can throw off the lion who has struck it down.

In fact Anstruther looks to her now as stern and terrible as that king of beasts, as he gives her a glance that makes her cower, for he is fearfully angry as well as fearfully in love with this beautiful creature who tortures him. She returns him a little broken-hearted smile, and says, tremulously, "Ask them!"

"Very well!" he replies. "You tell me that you love me, and yet say you will never marry me! What reason have you to dare to tell me that?"

"What right have you to dare to ask me that?"

"The right you gave me when you said you loved me! Dare to tell me those kisses were a shame on your womanhood and a fraud upon my manhood—deny that you are a true woman, and I ask no more!"

This is a terrible speech for Marina; she knows now she must either tell him why she refuses to give herself where she has given her heart, or let him think her a flirt, a coquette, or even worse, and so despise her—and let her go. His contempt is not to be borne for an instant. She cries proudly, "Gerard, I love you! My kisses were as true as ever woman gave to man, but I—I cannot marry you!"

"Cannot marry me? Are you the wife of another?"

"No!"

"Thank God!"

"And I will never marry any one but you; that I swear! if that will make you happy."

"Happy? when, after to-night, I am never to see your face again! Happy? when you love me and will not be mine!" And Edwin seizes this woman in his arms, whose beauty and whose love madden him; for, if Marina had hoped to bind him to her for ever, she could not have looked more enchanting than she does now, as her bare white arms flash out of the light dress that drapes the exquisite undulations of her graceful form, and close in pitying tenderness round the neck of this man she had sworn to herself she would never see again. He looks closely at her a moment, and then shudders, "There is despair in your face!" for her eyes are filled with that same hopeless agony that makes Guido's head of Beatrice Cenci the saddest painting upon earth.

"Despair!" she cries, "despair for you! Despair for me! *Adorato mio*, I love you —but I leave you!"

"Let me understand you," he says, forcing himself to be calmer; "were it not for an obstacle, you would marry me?"

"With all my soul! Oh, I should so like to be happy!"

"Then you shall be!"

"I cannot!—I dare not!"

"*You shall be!* Tell me what stands between you and me, and I will destroy it!"

"Never! You would condemn!"

At this he seizes her, looks her in the eyes, then laughs, and says, "Condemn? *You* couldn't do anything very wrong if you tried. Dear one, you were an angel in Alexandria, you could not be anything else in France!"

His confidence makes him dearer than ever to her; she will never tell him what may cost her his respect.

"Now," he says, "I will know what is destroying our happiness!"

"Never! It is a matter of my conscience. I do not tell it to the holy father who confesses me."

"Would he give you absolution if you did?" This is a terrible question; she droops her head.

"Ah! you are ashamed of it?"

"No," she cries, "I am proud of it!—oh! how cruel you are!"

"Cruel! To *you?*" and he has her in his arms again. "Oh! my love. Remember that you had no right, by your tender nursing, to save my life in Egypt, to make it unhappy for ever afterwards."

This view of the matter affects her more than anything he has said; she begins to falter and hesitate, and whispers, "I—I did not know you loved me so much; or that I would make you so unhappy. I—I will consider."

"Then it is a matter of your choice? You could be my wife if you would?"

"Y-e-s!"

"Then you shall be. I swear it. You love me. I have no fear."

She looks at him—hope is in his face; she knows he is conquering her, breaks from him, springs to the door of her bedroom, and there cries, "Leave me. I can tell you no more. Leave me alone, and let me fight the battle out between my duty and my love."

"But my answer," says Anstruther, following her.

"To-morrow, Gerard! Don't come near me," and she struggles from him, and pants, "Don't dare to kiss me—you fight your battle too strongly; I love you so. Keep away. Give my vow one chance."

"Your vow? What vow?"

"That you shall never know."

"That I will know, unless to-morrow you will promise to be my wife. Do you suppose I will have my life ruined, and not know the reason of it?"

"Have I not told you you shall have my answer to-morrow?"

"From your own lips?"

"No—by letter."

"From your own lips—promise."

"And if not?"

"I wait in that hall so that you do not fly from me."

"All night?"

"Yes; and all day too—to win you."

"Oh, Gerard! You foolish one! But I promise to tell my answer to your face as I speak now."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes!—Go!"

He makes no effort to caress her, but simply says, "To-morrow," and is going away looking very solemn and somewhat downhearted. She cannot bear to see him unhappy; she knows that she can never refuse him now, though she will not answer him to-night.

She calls him back to her, and says, "When you get downstairs tell Tomasso, my servant, he may send the carriage away. I will not leave Monaco for a week."

"For a week?" cries Anstruther, with a ring of joy in his voice.

"Yes!—*you're* not going away, are you?"

"I—no—I—what do you mean? Is this your answer?"

"No! I must bury my vow—before that. No answer till to-morrow;—but—good of my life—take this one kiss—and think perhaps God will let me make you happy." She holds up her lips to his; but, when he would keep her longer, breaks from him, and runs into her room; then locks the door, and walks the floor, wringing her hands like one possessed.

Some time afterwards old Tomasso brings her a telegram, and she reads,

"I have found the man. He is near us, where we can reach him. Be happy.

"DANELLA."

At this she utters a cry of baffled rage. Vengeance is at her hand, but she cannot take it without making the man she loves despair, for Gerard's wife must have no vow of the *vendetta* on her soul. Then she staggers to her brother's picture and begs, "Let me be happy! It was your wish, beloved one, that I should not

remember!" and here suddenly cries, "Antonio, forgive me! I, your sister, have betrayed you! Your face makes me ashamed!" turns his picture to the wall and sinks down to pray to God to take the Corsican out of her heart and make her worthy to be Gerard's wife.

Anstruther, whose battle this girl is fighting against her traditions, the faith of her wild race and the vow that she had made her household god, comes down from the interview with a serious but happy face, and a moment after mutters to himself, "How I must love her! I've forgotten my dinner!" Then looking at his watch finds it is just time for supper, to which he goes, humming a merry tune. "To the victors belong the spoils."

BOOK IV.

A NEW CRIME.

CHAPTER XVII.

"YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN YOU ARE A CORSICAN!"

THAT night Marina buries and puts from her, for love of this man, the vow she had made over her brother's body.

It is a funeral, with many tears and many struggles; for she is giving up what the faith of her fathers and the teachings of her race have made it her holy duty to perform.

But it is all or nothing, she knows that; and as she takes her brother's picture, and, covering it reverently, places it where it cannot remind her of the past, she gives it a kiss and a tear, but says to it, "Now if your murderer stood before me, helpless and in my hands, he is safe! The wife of Gerard must be no criminal, not even if she is a Corsican, whose neighbours cry out, 'Shame upon you! Your brother cannot rest within his grave—his sister, instead of avenging him, marries one of the nation from whom his murderer came!'"

So the night passes; and, at the end, in tears and prayer she has cast out the thing that has been a blight upon her life, and thinks, "I am Gerard's now, and must be holy for his sake."

And here another joy comes over her; she is a Catholic, she can now confess and receive the consolations of her religion, for since the day she had made her oath of vengeance she had not dared to face her church; with that in her heart she knows it would condemn and anathematize, even though all the traditions of her island said murder was just.

She has several times seen pass her at the hotel a priest, going on an errand of mercy to a sick boy brought here, when too late, that the balmy air of the Riviera may keep consumption from claiming his life.

This holy man, she remembers, is one of the kind to whom she could lay bare her heart; one in whose face there are traces of a struggle and victory over sin within himself; one who causes us to know that a true Christian makes the truest man.

It is by this time early morning; she sends to the office for his address, and word is brought to her that Father Enrique is now in the house, having come to administer the last rites of the Church to the dying boy. She waits in the corridor; and, as he returns from his mission, says to him, "Father, you have just been giving consolation to one who is to die, teach me how to live!" Then, drawing him to her room, she tells him the story of her life. The good priest looks at this beautiful sinner in some astonishment; for, though he has had some curious confessions from penitent ladies at Monte Carlo, still he has had none like this; but fortunately for her, being a man of common sense, after showing to her the enormity of her crime, and that all the customs or habits or passions of a country or a race could not make wrong right, nor nullify the law of God, whose law is the law of all who live upon this earth, nay more, of any who may exist within the universe, he begins to comfort and console her and lift her up, and show her that Heaven has kindly given her this great love for Gerard in order to turn her from her sin before she has consummated it, and the best and safest course for her is to marry as soon as possible, and leave behind her the awful passions of her other life.

"And my penance?" she asks. "My expiation?"

"Penance?—Repent! Expiation?—Be a good wife to this heretic you love; and if you can't make him a good Catholic, make him a good man!"

This perhaps is not very orthodox, but very human. He leaves her consoled and penitent; and, the contending passions in her soul being calmed, sleep comes to her and gives her rest.

Mr. Anstruther having no *vendetta* on his mind, has a very comfortable night's slumber without confession, but is disturbed in the early morning and thinks he hears a knocking; he grunts out some unintelligible exclamation and rolls over for another snooze. From this, however, he is awakened by a very sharp, vigorous and imperative attack upon his door. He springs out of bed and cries, "What is up? What's the matter?"

Enid's excited voice answers him from without, "Up! You're not up! That's the matter! We've only twenty minutes to catch the train. I had you called an hour ago, Edwin; dress quickly!"

At this he gives a prolonged whistle and mutters, "Cursed awkward; I forgot;" and then yells through the panel, "I won't be a minute, Enid!" and thinks of the rage of his fair sister when she discovers that he will not take her to England that day.

His mind is not made more easy by such exclamations as, "Hurry! Hurry! We'll miss the train! *You're* not going to him, *I* am! Be quick for *my* sake!" which come to him through the door as he dresses.

Thus adjured, he makes a hasty toilet, throws open his portal, and Miss Anstruther confronts him in a very pretty travelling dress, a look of expectant hope on her face, and an eager anxiety in her movements.

"Come!" she cries, "only ten minutes now! No time to bid Lady Chartris good-bye!"

"But my breakfast?" he suggests.

"Breakfast? Breakfast in Nice!—Come!" She turns to two porters behind her and says, "Bring down his luggage," and then in a little scream of despair utters, "Why, you've not *packed!*"

"No. Didn't I send word I was not going to-day?"

"Not going *to-day?*" Description would fail to give an idea of the surprised disappointment of the girl. Enid sinks down and mutters, "I have telegraphed to him. He will be at Dover to meet me!" then springs up and cries, "What does luggage matter to a sailor! Come!"

"No! I!—ah!—you see——"

"I see nothing but that we have nine minutes to catch a train upon which my happiness depends—Edwin! as you love me, come!"

"No! it's impossible," remarks Anstruther, with rather a hang-dog air; for he sees, with concern, there are tears of disappointment in his sister's beautiful eyes.

"Enid, I would go with you if I could—but, ah!—I didn't like to tell you before—the doctors think it's best for me not to exert myself too much. You know—my wound in Egypt!"

"Your wound! You frighten me!"

"Ah!—yes—you see—I'm not up to travel." With this he gives a little pant or two, and to work his case up, sinks apparently exhausted into a chair.

"Edwin, you are fainting!" she screams, giving him a glance of horror that makes him ashamed of himself; but he has to keep to his *rôle*, for he feels he cannot tell Enid the truth just yet; and to leave Marina, until he receives her answer, is of course out of the question. "You are not well enough to travel."

"Yes!" he replies. "It is because I was wounded in Egypt I do not leave Monaco to-day." And with this wretched prevarication he tries to soothe his conscience; but here Enid gives it another twist.

She whispers, "You are very ill! Oh! that awful wound! Will it never heal? Go to bed, darling; I will bring up your breakfast and stay here and nurse you!"

"But 'Burton, darling'?"

"Burton must wait; you are sick; he is well."

"What a dear little angel you are, Enid!" says her brother, taking her in his arms and kissing her, as she deserves, "I'm not so ill, but I'll be round all right to-morrow; and, when I do take you to England, you shall have the handsomest trousseau you ever dreamt of. Now, don't grieve me by being too much disappointed at not seeing Barnes for a day or two; and, above all, don't make me miserable by being anxious about me!"

But this show of affection increases her concern. She whispers, "You are trying to make me forget you are very ill. How fortunate I am here with you. For how many kisses will you go to bed?"

"Not for ten thousand!"

"You won't go to bed?"

"Not till midnight!"

"Then I will see that you do now. Yes, and that you have proper advice and attendance—until we make you strong again!" and Enid darts from the room, for she has just remembered there is a celebrated English surgeon in the hotel, and has run off to find him and send him to her dear invalid. Though the physician does not come, some one with greater power to soothe him does. In her pursuit of the doctor Enid runs across Marina, who has come down to eat

a little breakfast, for nature has resumed its sway and she has remembered that she had no dinner the night before. "What has happened to make you so happy!" cries Enid rapidly, and stares in astonishment, for the Corsican is as radiant as the sun, "You haven't left yet, dear; I feared I had missed you!"

"No, I shall remain a few days. I hope to see a great deal of you, now Mr. Barnes has gone."

"So you shall when my brother gets well."

"He is ill?"

"Very! He almost fainted in my arms a minute ago. I must find the doctor!" and Enid hurries off, not noticing that Marina has staggered and almost fainted too.

Mr. Anstruther has thrown off the hasty toilet made for his sister, and is now in deshabille, preparing an elaborate get-up with which he hopes to dazzle his Corsican sweetheart, when there comes a faint knock. He cries, "Don't come in! Is that you, Enid?"

"No! It is I!" says a trembling voice.

"Marina!" There is a scattering of bedroom articles as he springs to the door.

"Yes—come to nurse you as I did before. You are ill, Gerard!"

"Never better in my life!"

"Impossible! Your sister said you fainted! She said she would nurse you; but, Gerard, I claim that right!"

"And you shall have it when I am sick!" he cries with a merry voice, for her last words make him very happy. Then he hurriedly explains the deception he has practised upon Enid, and opening the door a little, says, "Dear one, if you don't believe me put in your hand and feel my pulse."

Here there is extended into the room a little palm, with groping fingers, which is seized upon; and, instead of a throbbing pulse, feels a long moustache and a pair of lips.

A moment of bliss, and Marina cries, "Gerard, let me go! If your sister saw me thus, what would she think?"

"If she sees you *thus*, show her *this*, and keep it, darling, till I can replace it with a better," and, finally withdrawing her hand, Marina finds Gerard's seal ring slipped upon her finger.

"Now, when will you meet me?"

"Whenever you like," whispers the girl, looking at the ring, and feeling it makes her his.

"Very well. Run away now, dear one, and in a few minutes I will call upon you in your parlour," says Mr. Anstruther, in a very confident and commanding voice to this captive of his bow and spear.

And he does so, and finds the girl waiting for him, more beautiful and more bashful than the evening before.

Happiness has perfected her charms, but made her timid compared to last night, when she thought never to see him again, and had the boldness of despair.

She is in a dead-white dress, a little out of the fashion, perhaps, as it has not done duty for over a year; but she feels anything is better for her this happy morning than the black she has worn, that reminds her of the vow she has cast out from her.

Anstruther enters the room, and pounces instantly upon his captive's hand, for he is in no mood to dally with his will-o'-the-wisp sweetheart, who has made him suffer so long, and says, "You have not taken off my ring."

"No," whispers his slave, "I did not dare to. I—I was afraid you might not like it."

"Quite right. And now you recollect that I told you that to-day you must promise to make me happy, or tell me the vow that prevented you."

"Yes; but there is no necessity of my telling you the vow, Gerard—it is gone. I destroyed it last night, for love of you."

"You darling! And you, will you marry me?"

"That is for you to say; light of my existence, my life is in your hands."

After half an hour of rapture, the two wander off from the hotel to pass the day together, for Edwin knows his sister is in pursuit of him with her doctor, and will, if she finds him, force him to an explanation or to the bed of an invalid.

Twice during the day he surprises Marina. The first time, he says suddenly, "Why did you never answer any of my letters that followed you from Egypt?"

"I never got them—where did you direct your correspondence?"

"Number 147, Boulevard Montmartre, Paris."

Marina says nothing, but does a few moments' meditation upon this curious fact, as the address he gave her was the correct one.

Somewhat later in the day he surprises her again.

She has just told him that Count Danella is her guardian.

"Musso Danella?" he asks.

"Yes!"

"That is magnificent. I met him two weeks ago in Gibraltar; we became great chums. He is one of the most entertaining men I ever knew. I'll write to him of our engagement to-morrow."

"That will be unnecessary, he will be here to-morrow."

"So much the better—it will shorten the time."

"What time, Gerard?"

"The time that stands between me and the day you will be my wife. You see I have been unhappy so long that somehow I fear that I may wake up to-morrow to find you flown, as after that evening in the Khedive's gardens. How could you make your heart so cruel to me? Could you not have destroyed what has kept us apart then, as you did last night?"

"Yes," Marina answers.

"Was it a fear that drove you from me?"

"No. It was a duty."

"And is the duty performed now?"

"No."

"Then tell me what it is and we will do it together?"

This question is what Marina has dreaded.

The priest to whom she has confessed has shown her the awful nature of her vow of vengeance, and has lashed and condemned in words of anathema the sin in which she has lived whilst plotting the murder of a fellow creature, but she dreads Edwin Anstruther's condemnation more. In Egypt, when he had become strong enough for light duty, and had been appointed to command the Provost Patrol of Alexandria, she had once seen a wretched camp-follower, captured in the act of looting an Arab house, brought before him. She remembers now her lover's mercilessly-just, cutting voice, and the terrible glance he threw upon this criminal, and trembles for herself. "What if he should think her unworthy of him and put her from his heart!" And she shrinks from her punishment parade like a child would from the rod.

"Don't you think," he says, after a pause, "you owe to me the knowledge of what has made us unhappy?"

"Yes," she gasps.

"Then what is it? Good Heavens! You are ill! You are fainting!" and he has her in his arms.

"No! But—as you love me, don't ask me my vow. Some day when I have made you think that I am very good—some day when as your wife I have tried to show you that I am better than you might think me, I'll tell you—all. Gerard, for my sake, don't ask me now."

After a little pause he says very slowly, but very tenderly, "I think I understand you, dear one; you have made some oath of renunciation of the world. I have often wondered why so young and beautiful a creature, not even of our nation, did such noble, gentle, Christian work in all that misery and death of the English hospital at Alexandria. You are a Sister of Charity without the garb. You fear I will condemn you because you have given up your vow to God for your love for me. I am Catholic enough to respect that vow, and when I am your husband, dear one, will help you to keep its spirit. There's suffering enough in England, and you shall be the Lady Bountiful of Beechwood. Your vow has made you dearer than ever to me. Did it not give me woman's nursing and woman's sympathy when I was far from home? God bless you!" and he gives her a kiss of reverence as well as passion.

Marina shudders in his arms. Dare she tell him now?—she had gone into that hospital not as an angel of mercy, but as an angel of death.

She can only gasp, "Don't! You make me ashamed of myself. Gerard, will God ever forgive me?"

"For loving me? Of course He will. But it distresses you, and I shall say no more about it until you ask me to help your work in dear old Hampshire." From this he goes off into a description of the good she can do in his English country home; and how she will be the toast of the county, and the belle of the meets at country side and race balls, when she is the lady of the Manor at Beechwood.

She listens to him, at ease again, for she knows he will keep his word, and some day, a long way off, when she has shown him how great her love is for him and that she has repented, she will confess to him and get his pardon.

Continuing, he asks her, "When shall the wedding be?" Here she surprises him and makes him very joyful, for she says, hiding her head in his breast, "The sooner the better." This he thinks is because she wishes to please him, when Marina's great thought is to get away from her old life as quickly as possible.

"Will a week be too short a time?" says the sailor, who believes in rapid action.

"No, Gerard, if it is your will, and will

make you happy," she answers simply, giving him her hand. Soon after they return to the hotel, and he goes to tell his sister the news.

As Marina passes up to her parlour, Tomasso, who has been waiting for her in the hall, enters after her; and, taking off his hat very respectfully, mutters with an embarrassed air, "Mademoiselle Marina, will you permit your old attendant, who is also your foster-father, to ask you a question?"

"Certainly, dear Tomasso," says the girl, holding out to him a hand which he kisses in a stately, reverential manner, standing before her in his native, picturesque costume, like a feudal servitor, making a figure that Meissonier might have immortalized with his brush, and called the portrait, "An Old Corsican."

So he begins, in his *patois*, "This English officer who has been with you so much these last two days—the one you nursed when I was with you in Egypt—is he a spy that is to betray his fellow who murdered your brother and my foster-son, into our hands?"

"No," replies Marina very faintly, "No, Tomasso, he is the man I love."

"He is English. Impossible!"

"Impossible? When I marry him?" says the girl sharply, for she will have no disrespect shown to the man she honours, even by Tomasso, who has dandled her as a child on his knee, and is very dear to her.

"*You* marry one of the brood who murdered *him?* Your brother's picture! It has gone from the wall! You no longer dare look it in the face!" this he utters as if astonished, and then gives a great cry of woe. "*Maledicta!* You have forgotten your vow!"

Every word of his has stung Marina like a lash.

"Don't reproach me!" she cries, "Tomasso, don't reproach me! The Church has taught me revenge is a crime."

"A crime? To slay thy brother's murderer? Antonio, your sister has betrayed you! But I, your foster-father, will remember!" Then this old man hisses at Marina, "Love has turned your blood to water! You, a Paoli, have forgotten you are a Corsican!—and for this scum——!"

He gets no further; his mistress turns upon him, a blaze of fury in her eyes, "I am still Corsican enough not to take insult from your lips! Though you are dear to me as one of my family, one word of disrespect to him I adore, to him who is *my lord*, and therefore *your master*, and you leave me for ever!"

At this the old man falls at her feet, whimpers like a dog, kisses her hand and begs her to forgive him, for he is as a bloodhound that has grown old in service; obedient to his mistress' whip; but face to face with his prey his eyes will become red; and then all the leashes and lashes in the world could not keep him from flying at his quarry's throat—and killing.

"Very well!" says Marina, relinquishing to him her hand, "I love you, Tomasso, and I pardon—but if after this you utter one word that is not honour to him, I forgive no more!"

So he goes out from her and stands as if stricken with despair, muttering to himself, "Danella will have a word to say to this! A Paoli not a Corsican? Heaven will turn her heart that such dishonour do not come to us!"

From this time he treats Edwin as his master; for he knows a sign of disrespect would cause the girl he worships to send him from her; but at times when looking at Anstruther, his eyes have a peculiar and not kindly glance.

As for his mistress, she looks after her servitor's retreating form, and thinks, "The sturdy old fellow, faithful in his loves, faithful in his hates—he is a better Corsican than I!" Here she laughs a little to herself, and cries, "I must send him to Father Enrique, to make him repent like me!" then suddenly becomes very pale, and mutters with white lips, "*My God, what will Danella do!*"

CHAPTER XVIII.

SATAN ENTERS PARADISE.

MR. ANSTRUTHER strolls into Lady Chartris' parlour, and asks, "Where's Enid?"

"Searching the hotel for you," says that matron, with a serious voice; "Edwin, you're to go to bed at once."

"To bed, mamma!" cries Maud, in astonishment. "Has he done anything naughty?" Bed in the day-time, to her, is a synonym of punishment.

"Of course not. He is ill."

"Oh, ill?" Here the girl turns her eyes on the supposed invalid, and diagnoses his case in an instant. "He looks too awfully jolly to be ill!"

"Maud, you're a very clever young lady," remarks Anstruther. Looking at the girl, a little sea-dog pleasantry comes to him, and he gives Lady Chartris this shot: "What are you educating Maud to be?"

"A lady, of course! Why do you ask?"

"Oh!"—here he puts a critical eye on the girl's abbreviated costume, and replies, "I had a suspicion you were bringing her up for the ballet."

"Chestnuts!" screams Maud, merrily.

"I don't like sailor jokes before children," says the widow, with a very red face, and, "What do you mean by 'chestnuts,' Maud?" for Maud has learnt this Americanism from Mr. Barnes.

"I mean I've heard that thing before!" laughs the miserable infant, rushing to her fate: "Von Bülow asked me how old I was the other day, and I told him I was only eleven, but that I had had three birthdays that you had said nothing about, and on which you gave me no presents!" She emphasizes the presents with a very savage glance at her mother, who says in a trembling voice, "Well?" for Baron Von Bülow's foreign airs and graces have made a cruel breach in her ardent old heart.

"Well, then, he said, 'Mamma makes you a ballet girl because she is too ancient to be one herself, *petite!*'"

Anstruther, who has looked on slightly amused at all this, is now astonished and somewhat shocked.

Lady Chartris becomes a pale saffron sallow, save her two *rouge* spots that are now streaked by a couple of trickling tears; she says to Maud in a voice that permits no reply, "Leave the room."

"You're not going to punish her for my fault, I hope, Lady Chartris?" asks Edwin.

"Certainly not; but I am going to take my child to England to-morrow, away from men who teach her to despise her mother." She says this with some dignity, and leaves him, her resolution having more effect on Edwin's fate than he knows of at the time.

He is scarcely by himself a moment when Enid, running in, says in an anxious voice, "Where have you been? You have made me so miserable. Doctor Sandwich and I have been looking for you all day. He prescribes immediate rest. Now go to bed, dear, and I'll bring him up to see you at once."

"No doctors for well men, Enid."

"You are not ill?" She gazes at him astonished.

"Never better in my life!" and he emphasizes his remark with a hearty guffaw.

At this she suddenly cries, "Why, you've got back your old laugh."

"My old laugh?"

"Yes; the one you told me you had left behind you in Egypt."

"Oh—ah! Yes—of course! I'm feeling up to a prize-fight now. This morning, had you brought force to compel me to go to bed, the fainting invalid would have astounded you."

"Astounded me?"

"Yes. He would have knocked out every Franco-Italian waiter in the hotel."

"Then you were not sick this morning?" and he gets a reproachful glance that makes him ashamed of himself, but he says, doggedly, "No."

On this Enid's face becomes angry, and she cries, "So you caused me, your sister, a day of anxious misery by pretending to faint—oh! what a heartless, practical joke. Then you disappear, and this afternoon, coming back in your genial quarter-deck manner, with some of your vulgar sailor witticisms send Lady Chartris in hysterics to her room, and poor Maud into despair. She is howling now at the thought of being dragged back to England to school. Infamous!" But this invective ends suddenly with a shudder, and the girl sobs, "You must be delirious, dear one;—I'll have the doctor."

Here Edwin gives another peal of merriment and asks, "Is that a maniac's laugh?"

"No; but what *sane* reason could you have for torturing one who loves you, by pretending illness?"

"Monaco is a pleasant loitering place, and 'Burton, darling,' could wait."

"So that was your reason. You preferred those frightful roulette tables to taking me to *him!* Oh! oh!" Rage stops her, but women are not often speechless long, from any cause; and, after a second, she exclaims, "No, you needn't pretend to love me and try to pull me upon the sofa beside you, and embrace me in your great brutal sailor captain's way.—Let me alone!" She gives a vicious stamp of her little foot, and then shoots at him, "Is this your duty to your sister in the hazard of her life?"

"Hazard of your life? What do you mean?"

"Don't you think, as my brother and my guardian, you ought to take me to

England and investigate the character of Mr. Barnes, to discover if he is worthy of me, before you entrust my life to his keeping?"

At this cunning appeal to carry her back to the absent Barnes, Mr. Anstruther gives a grin, and having all the winning cards in his hand proceeds to play them in a very lazy and nonchalant way. "Oh!—ah! I'm sorry you don't think 'Burton, darling,' worthy of you. Perhaps I had better break off the match by letter, Enid."

"Heavens! Do you want to break my heart? He is the dearest, noblest fellow upon earth. But, then, as a matter of form, you know it is your duty to investigate him."

"Impossible, for a few days! I have a reason."

"Then why didn't you tell it this morning instead of frightening me so unkindly?"

"I did not like to speak of the matter *then*."

"Ah?" Miss Anstruther is suspicious.

"But will tell you *now*."

"Darling!" Miss Anstruther is curious.

"I am going to be married!"

"Married! Edwin! To whom?" and Enid is questioning with eyes and tongue together. "It can't be Mildred Lawrence? She's the only English girl here.'

"I have not the honour of that young lady's acquaintance."

"You know no one! Great Heavens! Lady Chartris is agitated; she fears to meet me—Oh! it is she! My poor brother, the designing woman is old enough to be your mother!"

This is uttered in such agony that Edwin suggests, "Guess again. What do you say to Maud? She was also excited when I last saw her."

"This is too serious for fun. What English people do you know here!"

"None! But what would you say to Mademoiselle Paoli?"

"Edwin! Is it she? You love her?"

"With all my heart!—and you?"

"She is the dearest creature in the world; but I wish she was not a foreigner?" and Enid's face is a little troubled.

"Yes, it is hard!" says Mr. Anstruther. grimly. "Barnes is one too, I am told. Did I object to him?"

"No, darling! and I hope you will be as happy as I am; I can't wish you any more," murmurs Enid. Then she suddenly cries as if struck by an idea, "Why you're the man she's been breaking her heart about! That's the reason she used to kiss me nearly to death; she thought I looked like you; you were her love that was hopeless. How romantic! She has a vow!"

"Yes," says Edwin, very happy at these revelations.

"You know?"

"Of course!"

"Oh! tell me all about it!"

"She was to be a nun. She prayed all last night before she gave it up for me."

"Why, at one time I thought she was a Nihilist, or somebody that went about killing people."

"Don't talk nonsense, Enid," Mr. Anstruther says very sharply.

"But I am sure she did say something about assassination, and then, Burton——"

"I don't think you had better tell me what Burton said," remarks Anstruther, with a dangerous ring in his voice, "But, by Heaven! if he says anything against my angel! I'll——!"

"Stop!" cries Enid, with a little tremor in her voice and growing very pale; for, though every drop of blood in her body is thoroughbred, she is mortally afraid of setting these two men she loves at each other's throat by any words of hers. "Mr. Barnes invariably spoke to me of Mademoiselle Paoli in the highest terms, and with the highest respect."

"So I had presumed. Marina told me he introduced you to her."

"He did!"

"Do you insult him by supposing he would make you, his future wife, become acquainted with any one unworthy of your friendship?"

"Certainly not!"

"What did he say about her?"

"He said that he feared she was breaking her heart, and it was a pity that one so young and beautiful would not let herself be happy."

"A sensible fellow! I endorse his remark—but remember, I must have no prevarication in this. If Mr. Barnes has made any charges against Mademoiselle Paoli he shall have a chance to prove them, and if he doesn't, by the Lord——!"

"Remember I am your sister, and never feared you or any one else sufficiently to lie to them. Now what do you want to know?" says Miss Anstruther with dignity, a bright red spot of anger in either cheek.

"What was the worst thing Mr. Barnes ever said about Marina?"

"Well, when she disappointed me about being my bridesmaid, he said——"

"Ah!—What?"

"'I presume you know some girl in England who can take her place.'"

"Was that *all?*"

"Yes!"

At this her brother looks at her contemptuously a second, and says, "Well—I'm d—" He catches the naughty word between his teeth and goes on, "What do you mean, any way?"

"I mean," says Enid, who is perfectly content to take all the blame so long as the absent Barnes does not share her brother's wrath, "I mean foreign girls are sometimes queer."

"Queer, perhaps; but not queer enough to try, on nothing, to poison a brother's mind against the woman he loves. Enid, I am ashamed of you!"

"You can say what you like of me!" returns the young lady, "but don't you dare to utter a word against the man I love!"

"Of course not! Mr. Barnes, apparently, has common sense; I am only sorry that his future wife has so little," remarks Anstruther caustically; and then he begins to pace the room and look indignantly and reproachfully at his sister, whose meekness, to tell the truth, rather astonishes him, as Enid has a way of generally going into the front rank of the battle and staying there.

"Why don't you answer me?" he breaks out, facing his sister, and looking like a wounded lion. "What have I done to you that you should try to make me unhappy? When you wrote to me saying *you* loved, did I retort, 'He is a foreigner—perhaps a dynamiter and an assassin?' You had only known Mr. Barnes one week. I took your word that he was a gentleman and worthy of your love."

"Yes, dear, you were kindness itself," and there are tears in Enid's eyes, as she remembers her brother's letter.

"Yet, when I come to you and say: Here is the woman I have worshipped for a year—one who did a saint's work nursing the wounded and dying—who beat death from my couch, and when I awoke from delirium said, 'It shall be my office to make you well, so that your loved sister that you raved about shall see her brother's face again on earth——'"

"O—oh! The darling!" cries Enid, running to the door.

But Edwin, catching her, sternly demands, "Where are you going?"

"To give Marina a sister's kiss, dear!"

He detains her for a moment in his arms and says, "You are very dear to me, but don't you think you were a little foolish to-day?"

"Don't b-b-bully me any more," whispers his sister, choking. "Can't you see I am c-c-crying now?" She breaks from him, and going to Marina's rooms, salutes that young lady as her sister, and means it, for, after that hospital speech, not even Mr. Barnes could have made her believe anything but good of her brother's nurse.

After a few moments Marina says, "Enid, your eyes are red."

"Yes, I've been scolded for you, dear."

"Impossible!"

"Yes, I told him of your vow."

"Not what I said to you," falters Marina.

"Oh, he didn't let me."

"No—what did he say?"

"He commenced to strut and hector about and look like a lion at bay, and cry, 'By Heavens, if that Barnes says anything against my angel!'" and Enid laughs and gives a little pantomime of her brother's rage; then suddenly says, "Marina, don't tell him what Burton said to you about not associating with me, it would make trouble between the two men we love."

The Corsican considers a moment; then takes Miss Anstruther by both arms, looks her straight in the face and replies very gravely, "Certainly not! Mr. Barnes was right; I have taken his advice. My vow is a thing of the past; there is nothing now that can prevent my making a good wife to your brother. Do you believe me?"

"Don't I!" cried Enid, emphasizing her words with a tender embrace. "What a curious vow it must have been."

"Some day I will tell you," whispers the Corsican,—"but not now—now it is too sad a rememberance: but never doubt me or my love for your brother."

"As if I could," returns Enid. "Come down, my sister, and make him happy as well as me."

At this the two girls go together to Mr. Anstruther, when it is settled that Enid is to be Marina's bridesmaid; and then, the wedding over, they are all to go to England for another.

Miss Anstruther looks at the billing and cooing of the two lovers, until she feels like an unhappy peri standing at the gates of Paradise, then wanders off to write a long letter to the absent Barnes,

containing much unexpected and curious news.

Late at night, as Enid is going to bed, a knock comes at her door. "Who is it?" she cries.

"Marina!"

As the beautiful Corsican enters, Miss Anstruther asks, "Anything the matter?"

"No, but I thought you might like to talk about *him*.

"Come in bed with me, dear, and we'll devote the night to Burton."

"No, I mean Edwin," murmurs Marina with a laugh.

"Of course. How selfish I am. We'll halve them; I'll talk of one, you of the other."

And whispering of their two Adams, these two beautiful Eves sink into blissful slumber; while the early morning train brings into Monte Carlo the Serpent, in the form of Count Musso Danella, with the apple of knowledge, which is the root of evil, in his hand.

CHAPTER XIX.

SATAN LAUGHS.

Lady Chartris having wasted the devotion of her ardent but aged heart on the youthful fascinations of that volatile *attaché* of the German Embassy at Paris, Baron Von Bülow, his remark, as reported by Maud, together with that gentleman's marked and constant attention for the past few days to a young Hungarian countess, have disgusted the widow with the frivolities of Monaco.

That lady and her family leave the Grand Hotel early the next morning.

As Enid bids her good-bye, she whispers to her, "You are going straight to London?"

"Yes, trust me to get out of this horrible country as soon as possible."

"Then, if you are sure, take this," says Miss Anstruther, pressing into her hand a little packet, with these words, "It is for Burton. Give it to him immediately you arrive in London. He will call on you. I will telegraph your address. Tell him how I wish I could have gone with you; but I must stay to see Edwin married."

At the station, just prior to the departure of their train, a gentleman, with a foreign manner, noticing Lady Chartris and her daughter, suddenly starts and looks interested. He has apparently just arrived, being covered with the dust and stain of a long journey. After a moment's consideration, he approaches them, and, taking off his hat, politely remarks, "You will pardon me. I am Count Danella, Mademoiselle Paoli's guardian. You are Lady Chartris; I saw you once in Nice, but had not the pleasure of an introduction. I recognise you by your charming little girl—Maud, is it not?"

"Correct," returns that young lady.

"What can I do for you, Count?" says Lady Charteris, slightly surprised.

"Marina mentioned in her letters you were the chaperon of her charming friend, Mademoiselle Enid. You are departing from Monaco; does the young lady and her brother go with you?"

"No. They are both at the Grand Hotel. But you will excuse me, Count; I shall miss my train."

Musso carefully places the widow and family in their compartment, glancing about to see that no one else is in their party, for he is a man who prefers to be sure on important points. Just as the train is going he suddenly asks, turning pale, "Marina—she was to meet me in Nice last night; she was not there. She is well?"

"Very well, and jolly happy!" cries Maud, and would tell more, but the train carries her and her news away.

Danella takes off his hat again, a peculiar smile of triumph in his face, and mutters, "He is not running away—Good! Now, Marina will no longer refuse my reward."

Lady Chartris, on reaching Paris, thinks she might as well do some shopping, and loiters there, delaying Miss Anstruther's package, but postage-stamps are much more reliable than friendship, when applied to the delivery of correspondence.

Arrived at the Grand Hotel, Count Danella examines the register and verifies Lady Chartris' report, then goes to his room and

makes an elaborately dainty toilet of the whitest linen, reddest neck-tie, and brightest patent-leather boots, humming to himself, in the wildest manner, a gay little French *chanson* with a quaint refrain,

"*A Gibraltar! A Gibraltar!*"

After a verse or two of this, his face becomes very serious, however, and he communes with himself in a gloomy, philosophical manner upon what his visit to Gibraltar has produced. On arriving at the great British station, he has soon discovered that three extra officers had sailed from there as passengers on board the *Vulture* to join their ships in Egypt; which easily accounted for their names being omitted from the list forwarded from the Admiralty office in England. They were Charles Marion Phillips, George Fellows Arthur, and Edwin Gerard Anstruther.

A little investigation assured the Count that it must have been one of these three men who fought the duel; as it would have been almost impossible for a regular officer of the vessel to have obtained shore leave at Ajaccio on the very morning of the ship's sailing.

There are always a large number of English men-of-war at Gibraltar, and information in regard to the locality and movements of naval officers is not difficult to obtain. Danella was soon *en rapport* with the ward-room messes of half the British squadron. He entertained them on shore, and they invited him to dinner on board their ships. He soon learnt that Charles Marion Phillips had gone to the East India station, and George Fellows Arthur had been killed in action in Egypt on the *Sealark*. Mr. Anstruther he already knew was on duty on the same vessel, which had just arrived from Nice. Mr. Barnes, after falling in love with the last-named gentleman's sister, and probably meeting the young lieutenant in person in Nice, had suddenly exhibited enough interest in Marina's vow to call upon her, and, by delivering the message of her dying brother, attempt to induce her to relinquish her pursuit of the man who had killed him—a trouble he had never cared to take before. Probably, the American had recognised this English officer as the one of the duel. Of the three passengers on the *Vulture* Anstruther was evidenly the man to be investigated first.

Count Danella contrived to be invited on board the *Sealark*. At dinner he met Anstruther, and they soon became intimates, almost comrades; for Musso could make himself extremely fascinating when it suited his interest to be so. Edwin breakfasted with the Count, and the Count dined with him; and, when on shore, Anstruther sometimes spent the night at Danella's quarters. But, with all his art of conversation and tact at producing confidences, M. le Comte could never draw one word from the English lieutenant about the duel on the shore at Ajaccio. Musso dared not question directly, and so was compelled to look for circumstantial evidence, of which, after a time, Providence gave him all he wanted.

Anstruther had received his leave, and had told the Count he should come on shore the night before his departure for Nice and Monaco.

"You take your baggage with you, I presume, my dear Edwin?" remarked the Count.

"At first," returned Anstruther, "I had intended to let it go to England on the *Sealark*; it's much less trouble, you know. But, as I shan't join my ship again—she is to be paid off, and may be in the dry-dock before I return to the old country—and as my sister may keep me long on the Continent, I have decided to take it with me."

"Let's go on board now, and I'll help you pack."

"Much obliged, Danella, but I finished that before I came on shore."

"Ah! You make me happy. Then you are here for the day! I shall not let you go from me now! Send for your baggage! Dine and sleep with me here, and I'll see you off in the morning."

"I hardly like to refuse you, Danella, but I ought to bid good-bye to Harrison of the Rifles, and McDermot of the Marines; they're old friends, and you know I leave the service. This will be my last cruise, and, perhaps, my last visit to Gibraltar."

"You shall do both, my young English friend," cried the Count; "McDermot and Harrison shall dine with me too, and your last day of active duty shall end with a merry night."

Anstruther sent for his baggage. Danella gave him and his friends as delightful a little dinner as could have been obtained at the Café Anglais, Paris—for he was a connoisseur in all matters of the table—and as the Spanish wines were very heady and fiery, Lieutenant Edwin Gerard Anstruther, of the Queen's navy, went to bed rather top-heavy and slept very soundly.

The next morning the Count saw him off on his road to France; but, as he was bidding him good-bye, took a very peculiar squint at a valise among Edwin's luggage, and cried, "I may meet you at Nice or Monte Carlo, my boy; so, *au revoir!*"

After running this through in his mind, Danella's face becomes very serious, and he mutters to himself, "What a pity—he's such a fine fellow—but all for love! Now that I have fulfilled my promise, my little dove cannot be unkind to her Musso. But how to finish the affair? Corsica's the place. All Englishmen are sportsmen. I'll invite him to a moufflon bateau—Marina shall shoot a sheep, and then —*Voilà!*"

This exclamation he fires out of his mouth like a pistol-shot, bursts into a merry laugh, rings the bell and says to the answering servant, "My card for Mademoiselle Paoli."

In his intercourse with that young lady, M. Danella employs a great deal of stately ceremony, which she demands and he tenders very willingly, as he is, in every way, careful of his fair ward's good name. The small proprieties of life the Count observes; but, to gain Marina, big ones are bagatelles.

"Mademoiselle Paoli will receive Monsieur," says the servant returning, and with that shows him to Marina's parlour.

At the door Danella pauses, almost trembles, passes a handkerchief over his throbbing temples to wipe from them the moisture of intense nervous excitement, then suddenly a flash of longing anticipation makes his delicate features radiant. He mutters to himself with almost a sarcastic smile, "At last, Musso, you old fool!" and opens the door that keeps him from the happiness he thinks he has won.

Since she has read his name upon the card, Marina has been thinking, "What in his wild disappointment will this man do?" She knows Danella's nature too well to suppose that he will let his dream of existence be plucked from him in the moment of realization, without a fierce struggle, and perchance, if it comes in his way, a cruel revenge. It is the last that makes her fear her guardian. He may tell Edwin of her vow—may prove her ministry in the Egyptian hospital was that of a hypocrite, not a saint. She knows the opinion that Gerard has of all deceit—this makes her tremble. But here her great love rises up in her and gives her courage to destroy any hope the Count may have, and to baffle any plan he may devise to separate her from the man she adores.

When Musso opens the door, he sees a woman divinely beautiful, for the great happiness of the last two days has left its reflection on her face, which is pale, but beaming with courage and resolution.

She comes towards him, holding out a hand that trembles a little as he kisses it. He exclaims, "*Ma belle*, what witchery in the joy of the roulette table to make such a change! No more the drooping Niobe of Nice; you are the Venus of Monte Carlo. As all things come to them that wait, so has my triumph come to me. We have your enemy, and, when that is all over, you will keep your promise?" and would take her in his arms.

But she struggles from him and cries, "*Never!*" in a voice that makes him pause.

"You hardly understand me, I think," he says after a moment, growing very pale. "Beautiful one, you surely remember some time ago you gave me a promise, perhaps not in words, but still, I think we understood each other, that when I had given you vengeance, you should give me love, and consent to make your Musso happy, who has but one hope—and that hope—*you!*"

"Don't remind me!" says Marina, getting as pale as he is.

"My glorious news has excited you; you are trembling, but the eyes of love are not blind; I can see you are happy."

"I hope to be," murmurs the girl, "if you will but let me."

"Will not I! Count on Danella! I can place my hand on the object of your vow! by my aid you will be able to look on the tomb of your brother and be not ashamed! You can cry 'Antonio! Rest in peace! Your sister did not forget your wrongs! She is a Corsican!'"

The enthusiasm of his manner and the *élan* of his speech for one instant make her the Marina of old, and she takes up his strain, whispering with a hoarse voice, "When the murderer of my brother lies dead at my feet, then, who can sing the *Rimbecco* to me—then, who can reproach?" As she says this Marina stands as if still a priestess at the altar of vengeance. But the next moment shuddering, she sobs, "Have I not conquered my hate for his love? Know that the vow of the *vendetta* died in me two nights ago; that my brother's assassin, were he helpless before me now, is safe!"

"Are you crazy?" asks the Count, becoming even paler than before.

"Not now, but I was! Thank heaven my eyes are open! I have confessed! I am absolved! I sin no more!"

"And you renounce the vow of your life for a dogma of the Church?" he falters.

"For more! For my happiness! For my love! I hated and was accursed—I love and am happy!" As she says this the Count sees an expression come into the girl's face that was never there before, and his heart becomes very heavy.

"You love?" he gasps.

"Love? I adore!"

"It cannot be! No one can help you in your vow as I can. This—this man will not be the slave of your hate as I will—he cannot love you well enough for that."

"Thank God! No!"

"Ah! He is some thoughtless boy who will make you his handmaiden; who will not worship you like Danella, who has seen you grow up to be beautiful; who has learnt to love your graces as you became the fairest on earth! Pity me! I have only you." With this he falls at her feet, and with the extravagant gestures of the Latin race, bathes her hands in tears and dries them with his kisses.

"You have been—very—very good to me all my life," says the girl tenderly, for his despair moves her, and to this moment no man in the world could have been more considerate of her wishes.

"Ah! you are beginning to remember at last! When as a child you cried for a bauble, who gave it to you?—Musso! When as a woman you cried to heaven for vengeance, who gave up luxury in Paris and ran half the world over that you might fulfil your vow?—Danella!—the man you are deserting for a stranger—the man whose heart is in your hands. Come, I will tell you who it is you are to slay, and you will love me!"

At this Marina gives a cry, and falters, "Don't tell me that! In mercy, not that!" Then looking straight into his face with flashing eyes, she shouts at him, "I forbid you! Dare to tell me that and I shall hate you! Do you see that bare wall? My brother's picture is torn from it! If I have forgotten him, for love of this man, do you think I will remember you?" Marina points to the place where Antonio's picture had hung until Anstruther had conquered her.

Danella rises slowly and gazes at her for a moment, and then mutters in a broken voice, "You love him well enough for that?" Since he has been on his knees he seems to have grown older, his face has more wrinkles.

"I love him well enough to give up my vow for him; I love him well enough to make my life one that will do him honour," says the girl proudly.

"Impossible!"

"Impossible? Within the week I marry him!"

"Marry him? You forget I am your guardian. You are but twenty. By the law of France you must have my consent! I refuse it!"

"I have thought of that—the man I marry is not French; we will be married where French law does not prevail. You dare not drag me back to France! I defy you!" Marina utters this boldly.

Danella sees she is resolved; for a moment his face is haggard with misery; but, in another second, it assumes the appearance of profound thought, as he asks, "Tell me, is the man you love of a noble, honest nature?"

"Noble as a god!"

"Then, Mademoiselle, my task is an easy one. I have but to go to this very noble gentleman and tell him for the last year that you have been hunting a human being, as you would a beast of prey, with murder in your heart, and, if he is the man you say he is, he will hardly marry a Corsican tigress."

"Tell him that, and he will say you lie!" cries Marina, desperately.

"I'll prove the lie; and then run him through the body for his insult!" remarks Danella, with a wicked look, which rouses the anger of the haughty girl.

"You run him through the body?—you!" she laughs. "Why, he'd crush your little monkey frame as if you were a mosquito that had stung him! You prove to him I have an assassin's heart? I who have been his Angel of Mercy! I, who proved to him a year ago in Alexandria by the bed on which he lay wounded that I was a saint! Go to him with your *truth*, and he'll kill you as he would a dog! Here is his card—go to him!" and Marina seizes one from her basket and hands it to Danella.

At the first part of her speech Musso had writhed with shame, at the last he stands in astonishment; and, as he glances at the name upon the card, he almost utters a cry of hideous triumph, but by a desperate effort fights down the joy in his heart, and with an unholy light in his dark eyes mutters, "Edwin Gerard Anstruther! Is this the man?"

"Yes!" says Marina, who is now ashamed of her cruel words to one whose only crime has been that of loving her too well. "You have seen him—you know how noble he is. Forgive me for loving him."

"I will consider," mutters Danella. "You shall have my answer—to-day. Oh! my God! You shall repent those cruel words—Marina!" He gives a gasp of love or hate, or perhaps a mixture of both, and staggers from the apartment.

"I repent them now!" cries Marina after him; for, though passionate, she is generous.

But he is out of hearing. Were he within the sound of her voice, it would hardly convey meaning to his ears, for Musso Danella is holding counsel with Satan. There is a horrible agony on his face, but a weird, fantastic grin is convulsing his mobile Italian features, while from his mouth, hissing through his white teeth that are clenched in rage, there comes a laugh, such as is heard in Hades when some new crime, more cruel than ever entered devils' heads before is invented, to make earth desolate and heaven weep.

CHAPTER XX.

THE VALISE MARKED "G. A."

A FEW hours after, Tomasso brings Marina a note, which reads as follows:—

"Monaco, May 21st, 1883.

"My dear Ward:

"You have asked my consent to your marriage with Monsieur le lieutenant Edwin Gerard Anstruther, of the English naval service. I, as your guardian, hereby grant it formally in writing, as I believe it is thus required by the law of France. Please believe me, when I say that I think your future husband is a very fine, as well as a very fortunate gentleman. Tender him my congratulations, and mention to him that I will do myself the honour to call upon him this evening to arrange the necessary legal preliminaries for your wedding. With regards, as always,

"Your affectionate guardian,

"MUSSO DANELLA.

"To Mademoiselle Marina Paoli,
"Grand Hotel."

This, she shows, with beaming face to Edwin; for Marina feels that the last possible bar to her complete happiness is removed, and imagines that the Count has now made up his mind to become reconciled to the loss of her, seeing that her affections are entirely and irrevocably another's.

Enid, who is present, remarks, glancing at the note, "Monsieur le Comte must be a very unceremonious sort of a gentleman!"

"Exactly the reverse; Danella is punctilio itself," replies the Corsican.

"Well! his note doesn't look like it. The guardian to call upon the suitor. Edwin, here's honour for you!"

"You see Musso and I became such chums in Gibraltar. He wants another bachelor evening out of me, I suppose, and I haven't many more free and easies left to me," says Anstruther, pretending to give a heart-rending sigh.

At this, Marina nestles up to him and whispers, "Do you regret, *mio adorato?*"

"Regret that my great happiness is so near me? Regret that I am losing the mess of the *Sealark* and the wits of the United Service Club, for your society? Beg pardon at once for the insinuations, or—better still, I will inflict a penance!"

He draws her to him, but Marina exclaims, "You forget your sister!"

"Not at all!" laughs Anstruther. "Enid, would you kiss 'Burton, darling,' before me?"

"The idea! I wouldn't kiss Mr. Barnes at all!"

"Since when?"

"Since he sent me this cruel telegram!" cries Enid. "I thought I'd astonish him a little, and so I telegraphed him, 'Marina is to be the bride and I am to be the bridesmaid—Guess why?' and he answered, "Don't send cipher without key—write to me instantly—your dispatches have made me very anxious—are you delirious?' So dictatorial!—'Write me instantly!' And so strange! 'Are you delirious?' I'll show him whether I am delirious when I write!"

"There's some mistake. He mentions dispatches—what did you telegraph to him before?" says Anstruther suddenly.

"When you promised to take me to England of course I had not time to write, and so I despatched him this—I've got a

copy of it in my note-book—'Edwin is here. We leave for London to-morrow morning. Meet me at Dover"—and when you pretended to be ill I sent him, 'Detained on account of illness—don't be too much disappointed!' Lady Chartris also has a letter to deliver, but it isn't time for him to have that."

"Why, Mr. Barnes's dispatch is a great deal clearer than your telegrams, Miss Accuracy!" laughs Edwin. "Your 'Detained on account of illness!' has made 'Burton, darling,' think *you* are ill, and as he knows nothing of Marina's engagement to me, that bridesmaid message seems like the ravings of a lunatic.—My dear, I don't wonder he is anxious!"

"Then my stupidity has made him fear for me, the darling! Yes, if he were here I'd kiss him before you both!" and, saying this effusively, Miss Anstruther, who, in spite of her brother's happiness, is very lonely without the absent Barnes, goes away, leaving the lovers to themselves.

That evening after dinner the Count enters Edwin's room with a hearty, jovial, off-hand manner that is perhaps too pronounced to be perfectly natural, and cries out, "Anstruther, *mon ami*, my congratulations! You see my *au revoir* at Gibraltar was a presentiment; we meet at Monte Carlo! Let us talk over our business, not as men of affairs, but as friends."

"Take a chair and a weed, Musso," Edwin answers, and, rising, gives Danella's slight fingers a hearty grip that makes him wince, then suddenly exclaims, "What's the matter, my dear fellow? You look ten years older."

"At my age railway journeys tell upon me, and from Gibraltar to Monaco is a very long one—that cigar is a good one," says the Count with a sigh, as he sinks into a chair in a lazy, nonchalant manner, though his eager dark eyes peer about the room with a restless gaze, inspecting every detail. For a moment they seem disappointed, but suddenly rest with a peculiar and satisfied stare upon a leather valise, marked "G. A." There is nothing extraordinary about this piece of luggage, except perhaps that it is more battered, dilapidated, generally burst up and ragged about the corners and edges than any other valise of Mr. Anstruther's. Still during the whole interview the Count may force his eyes to wander, invariably they return to the old and dilapidated little dirty trunk covered with numerous way bills, and seem to verily gloat over it.

"You are a good traveller, Monsieur Gerard; you lose no baggage on the road."

"Not a hand-satchel. Though a beggar of a porter at Marseilles came near placing that one you are looking at upon the Lyons train."

"Ah!" replies the Count, with a little start, "I am charmed, *mon ami*, that it did not escape you." He gives another furtive longing glance at the valise, and cries, "But to business! You wish to marry my ward! I consent. I would on general principles have preferred a Frenchman, but I fortunately know and respect you; and with Marina, apparently, it is you or no husband at all."

"No Frenchman would do more to make her happy, for no one could love her better," returns Anstruther, and he goes off into a long lover's rapture, at which the Count shrugs his shoulders and laughs, and finally cries, "You are an ardent boy."

"Of course I am. I don't insult such beauty as Marina's by playing indifference. I wish to marry your ward within the week."

"You are impetuous, *mon fils!* But I agree with you, as it suits my plans. I can see your wedding, render an account to you of my stewardship of Marina's property, turn it over to you, and be in Paris in time to attend to my own affairs. Good! I consent. Now as to your finances?"

Here Edwin astonishes the Count by the settlements he proposes, for Anstruther as the Master of Beechwood is very well off; and, being very much in love, is inclined to be very liberal to his future wife.

In reply, the Count tells him that Marina would not be considered rich for an English girl; but, for a Corsican, is quite an heiress; and gives him an account of his ward's property, which shows that under the Count's careful management it has considerably increased in value and income.

In conclusion, he says, "You will have to come over to Corsica with me, that I may surrender Marina's property to you, and make the proper settlement of accounts; also that you may appoint an overseer to manage your wife's estates and remit her income to England, for when Marina becomes yours, I cease to take further financial interest in her affairs, unless my advice is of assistance, when, of course, it is at your service. Now, to-day is Monday;

it is decorous and proper that my ward should marry you from my home; she can thus get another look at her country and her island before she becomes a great English lady. The steamer leaves Nice for Bastia on Wednesday; by the next morning we are there. Then a short day's drive through the most beautiful land upon earth—through low hills upon the base of the Rontondo, through orange and olive groves and palm-trees—in short, through Corsica in May, and behold us in Marina's home! On Friday, a Corsican wedding—and then—then—you must look after your own happiness, which will doubtless be very great!" Here Musso gives another squint at the valise marked "G. A." But seeing Anstruther hesitating, continues quickly, "You can return on Tuesday by steamer to Marseilles; and I can scarcely imagine a more beautiful two or three days of early honeymoon than can be spent wandering with your bride through the woods of Bocognano, among the romantic slopes of Del Oro and the vineyards of Vivario. Tell Marina it is a last favour I ask, to see her wedded from her native village, in a manner worthy of the last daughter of the Paolis—that on her nuptial day she may be a true daughter of ancient Corsica, and I do not think she will refuse me."

"I accept for her, and thank you too," says Anstruther, giving him a warm clasp of the hand. "It is very thoughtful of you, Count. I can make the necessary arrangement as to Marina's property while there, and it will save me another visit to the island."

"Then it is a bargain. We leave by the Wednesday's steamer," cries Danella. "Of course, you will be my guest! Mine *Mine!* MINE!" Musso gives the last with a kind of hissing intensity.

"Certainly. I and my sister will be your guests."

"Oh—ah, your sister—I have heard of her," remarks the Count, a slight cloud passing over his face. "Take me down and introduce me to Mademoiselle Enid, my dear fellow. You have a beautiful sister—you will have a lovely bride; may you be happy!" Then Musso places his arm in Edwin's, and giving one last longing affectionate glance at the valise marked "G. A.," goes downstairs, and devotes himself to Enid Anstruther's service, making himself very agreeable to that young lady by several little anecdotes he tells of the absent Barnes.

"You write to him every day, I suppose?" laughs the Count.

"No, but to-night I shall telegraph him all about our going to Corsica for the wedding."

At this, Danella looks as if in deep thought for a moment; and then replies, "Give me his address and I'll save you the trouble; I can send him our route and ask him to join us and be our guest."

"Will you?" cries Enid. "I know I can trust you gentlemen of the old school; you are always so exact. It would make me very happy if he were with me in Corsica," and she gives Musso Barnes' address, not doubting that her sweetheart would receive the news next morning. But gentlemen of the old school are sometimes remiss; the Count forgets to send the message, and the American hears nothing of the Corsican wedding.

Later on Marina comes to Danella and says "A word with you. You have been very kind in saying nothing to Edwin that could be unpleasant to me. He thinks it best that I am married from the home of my fathers. I go on one condition."

"What condition, *ma belle?* A handsome wedding? It shall be in true Corsican style. You and your lovely bridesmaid shall be dressed in the costume of your island. It will be very beautiful—and happy."

"The condition I make is, that no one shall speak to me of my dead brother. Tell all the peasants in my village that I have not forgotten Antonio. Heaven! if one should sing the *Rimbecco* to me it would break my heart."

"I will see to it," says Danella, shortly.

"Thank you," murmurs the girl. "You have made me very happy. I should like to see my dear old island and the chestnut woods and the white torrent of the dear river Gravona once more before I become English and forget I am no longer a Paoli and a Corsican. God bless you, dear Musso!" She seizes his hand and kisses it and leaves him.

After she had gone Danella repents—but only for a moment; for, in the moonlight, as he stands on the balcony of the hotel, he sees Marina kiss her lover goodnight, and mutters to himself with a groan of agony, "Before my face—*Mon Dieu!* She has no mercy. Then why should I have pity!"

Wednesday, the morning of their departure from Monaco, a young English

tourist, Jones by name, comes down in great peculiar British rage to the office of the hotel, and says with a drawling cockney accent, "By Jove! I—er—have a—a complaint to make—the man who has the next room to me, No. 187!"

"M. le Comte Danella," murmurs the polite clerk.

"A count?" cries the cockney. "I—er—thought he was an impressario or singing teacher, or something artistic. He had a queer-looking cove—that old chap that wears that romantic brigand costume like tenors sport in hop'ra!"

"Oh, Tomasso, Mademoiselle Paoli's servant," suggests the clerk.

"Yes, of course. There he is, with his peculiar sleepy smile, the one bringing down stairs that old leather valise. Well, curse me if the Count didn't give him a music-lesson last night, and taught him the most 'orrible song I ever 'eard. I've been studying Hitalian, you know, and it had nothing in it but death and murder, and all that; the partition was so thin that, blow me up, I thought I 'ad the night-mare!"

"You will be troubled no more, Monsieur Jones," says the clerk, "Count Danella and his party leave this morning for Corsica. There goes Mademoiselle Anstruther, the English beauty."

"Ah! give me the dark-eyed one," returns the cockney, "the one stepping into the carriage. Oh, Lud! what an ankle! And—aw! did you see the look she gave me?—my Piccadilly hair catches these foreign girls."

That evening the train from Paris brings to Monaco a young man whose appearance shows hasty and continuous travel. It is Mr. Barnes of New York.

In the hurry and bustle of lawyers' consultations and ocean cablegrams, that his settlements on Miss Anstruther necessitate, Enid's first telegram had given him a shock; for it told him that Edwin Anstruther and Marina Paoli were in the same hotel at Monte Carlo. The dispatch about Marina's being a bride made him fearful, and he crossed hastily for Paris; there found Lady Chartris; received Enid's packet, and learned that what he dreaded had taken place. Unsuspecting it, Marina was about to marry the man who had killed her brother; the man against whose life she had uttered the vow of the *vendetta*. On such a subject he dare not telegraph, and the 7.20 express that leaves Paris on Tuesday night bears him as fast as steam can bring him, through Lyons, Marseilles and Nice, and into Monaco, Wednesday evening.

He hurries to the Grand Hotel and says in an unusually excited voice, "Take my card to Miss Anstruther!" The terrible errand he comes on crushes even the joy of meeting her.

"Mr. Barnes," replies the clerk, who knows him very well, "Miss Anstruther left Monte Carlo this morning together with her brother."

"For England? I missed them on the way."

"No, for Corsica."

"For Corsica?" gasps Barnes, who has just received one of the few genuine sensations of his life. "Good Heavens! for what?"

"For Mr. Anstruther's marriage to Mademoiselle Paoli. Count Danella and that young lady left at the same time. The ceremony takes place on Friday, I believe, at the young lady's family estate, on the island. You seemed surprised."

"A—little," murmurs Barnes. "I wonder they did not notify me."

"I think they did, sir." I heard Count Danella ask Mademoiselle Anstruther for your London address in order to invite you to the wedding. They were standing within hearing of this desk, sir, on Monday evening."

"What time did you say?"

"Monday evening about nine o'clock."

Barnes knows he was in London that night till twelve o'clock; but his faculties are gradually coming back to him, and he returns, "Must have left there before it arrived. Which route did the party take to Corsica?"

"Their trunks were labelled Nice and Bastia."

"And the steamer leaves Nice?"

"To-day, sir, Wednesday. Five P.M."

"Then I've missed it. All right," says Barnes. "Order a little dinner for me as soon as possible. I'll be back in a few minutes. No need to take my valise to a room; I leave by the next train."

He hurries to the telegraph office and there discovers that no messages whatever were sent to him on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday. Danella had taken his address to make Enid think he was notified, and prevent her sending him a dispatch. He telegraphs to Nice and finds the Bastia steamer has already sailed. It is half-past six now.

The more he meditates upon the affair

the less he likes it; for as he turns the matter over in his mind, Musso's significant words to him in Nice flash through his brain; "*If we can lure him to Corsica and kill him there, Marina Paoli will be blessed by a native jury as the guardian angel of her brother's tomb!*" They illumine and make distinct the outlines of the gloomy problem he has already formed in his mind.

Danella was using Edwin's love for the girl to entice Anstruther to Corsica, that, after his murder, his assassin might be safe. If Marina loved the Englishman, Danella would hate him; if she did not love him, then she would have no compunctions in slaying the murderer of her brother—her creed taught her it was just.

Whether she loves Edwin or loves him not, this horrible marriage must be stopped, he thinks, and sends, via the cable to Bastia, the following dispatch:

"MONACO, May 23rd, 1883.

"To Miss Enid Anstruther,

"On board steamer to arrive from Nice.

"Delay your brother's marriage by every means in your power till I arrive. I missed you in Nice, but will follow you to Corsica by very earliest possible vessel. If absolutely necessary, as a last resource, show Edwin this telegram and tell him that you know I would not take this stand unless it were vital. BURTON H. BARNES."

This dispatched, he has little time for thought, but bolts a hasty meal and goes down by the train to Nice. He soon discovers there are two more steamer routes open to him, one from Marseilles to Ajaccio, and the other from Genoa to Bastia, and by diligence to Bocognano. He walks down to the harbour and sees a smart-looking felucca that has just discharged a load of fruit, asks the captain, a bright Italian sailor, in how long he could make the run to Ajaccio.

"With an ordinary wind, twenty-four hours, with a fair one, perhaps eighteen."

With reasonable luck, this is considerably quicker than either of the steam lines, whose boats do not leave for several days, will carry him to his destination.

He makes a bargain with the captain to take him to Corsica, and asks, "When can you sail?"

"To-morrow morning."

"No use—it must be to-night—within the hour!"

"Impossible!"

"Within the half hour and I double your money!"

"I weigh anchor in fifteen minutes!" cries the captain, and he gets his ragged half-naked crew at work with a will, replacing one or two who are not within reach by a couple of loiterers on the quay.

Barnes aids him with all his might, and being something of a yachtsman, pushes the crew ahead, so that the little vessel is soon under weigh and heading for Corsica with every sail that will draw expanded to the light southern breeze.

"And now," cries Barnes, "if you put me in Ajaccio by Thursday afternoon, three times the money I promised you, captain, and a doubloon apiece for every man and boy of your crew."

Inspired by the offer of this man they call the crazy American, the sailors work with a will, and as the sun rises in the morning a faint blue speck is on the horizon that the captain tells him is Corsica.

But, as the day comes up, the breeze, that has never been very strong, goes down; and soon the light vessel rolls upon the lazy swell of an unrippled sea, while the burning Mediterranean sun shines on the white sails that flap against the lateen yards, and the blue speck in the horizon ceases to become larger.

All that night, Barnes has kept his mind on but one thing; and that was to keep the crew up to their work so as to get every particle of speed that was in the felucca, out of her.

Now that further exertion for the time is useless, he begins to fear what may be the result of all this last miserable day has brought to him. They are taking Enid's brother to the land of the *vendetta*, to murder him; what fate will come to the sister? He knows the spirit and courage of his love; she is no girl to let the brother of her childhood be slain at her side and not do her utmost to save him—perchance dying with him or for him; *what if they kill her too?*

At this sickening thought, his face grows deadly pale; he trembles as he falters to himself, "What if I have seen the last of her bright face? Could I live without her now?" and with a groan Barnes sinks upon the deck, and gazing with bloodshot eyes at that far-off speck of blue upon the shining sea, cries, "OH, GOD! FOR A LITTLE BREEZE TO CARRY ME TO CORSICA IN TIME!"

BOOK V.

THE CORSICAN WEDDING.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HOME OF THE VENDETTA.

"HERE! the land of the Corsican Brothers; and there," (pointing to the seaward) "the island of Monte Cristo! I am in the region of romance!" cries Miss Anstruther as she is assisted on to the quay at Bastia by Danella. "Have you a *vendetta* of your own every day, Monsieur le Comte?"

"Yes! with breakfast!" returns that gentleman, giving a vivacious laugh.

The voyage has been a pleasant one. The Mediterranean all night has been placid as an inland lake; the ladies have suffered no pangs of sea-sickness and the bridal party are in the highest spirits, though Danella in appearance is the happiest of them all.

Enid says to him, "You are so merry, one would think *you* were the bridegroom, Count."

At this, Musso gives a jovial chuckle, and replies gallantly, "Ah! yes! Mademoiselle, if *you* were to be the bride. *Mon Dieu!* if I were the absent Monsieur Barnes!" Here he gives a playful groan; but being reminded that he has a little commission to execute, cries, "Anstruther! take both the ladies on your hands for a minute!" Then as the party have already breakfasted on board the steamer, and are only waiting while the horses are being put to their carriage, Musso strolls to the little telegraph office, catching the clerk just coming out, with a message in his hand.

"I called," says Danella, "to see if you have received a dispatch for Mademoiselle Enid Anstruther or her brother? They are of my party who arrived from Nice this morning."

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte," replies the clerk, for Musso's large possessions on the island caused him to be generally known. "I was just going to try and deliver it. It is for the young lady."

"Glad to have saved you your trouble, *mon ami!*" returns Danella with a smile. As he receives the message he carelessly asks, "Where did this come from?"

"Monte Carlo!"

The Count checks a start of surprise and strolls back muttering to himself, "Monsieur Barnes has caught a sniff of the scent. Monte Carlo! If he had stopped in Nice, *en route* from Paris, he would have overtaken us. Behold the beauties of an analytical mind!" He gazes at the telegram, gives a little laugh, and goes on, "Now, he cannot interfere till they are married! And then! *Voilà, tout est fini.*"

Every preparation had been thoughtfully made in advance by the Count. Fresh horses await the party at the post stations, and their journey through the beautiful scenery of the lovely and romantic island, that in May is at its best and brightest, is a rapid and easy one.

The baggage of the party follows in a waggon; upon the front seat of which sits old Tomasso, with the same quiet, sleepy smile on his uncompromising blood-hound face that it has worn ever since Danella came to Monte Carlo. Beside him lies the valise marked "G. A." For some unknown reason, he seems, perhaps because the Count has requested him, to have taken a great regard for this dirty old piece of luggage; for, throughout the whole journey, his eye rests upon it; and he carries it in person to the steamboat at Nice, and off again at Bastia.

All that day, Musso, who is in wonderful spirits, at her request keeps Miss Anstruther's eyes large with wonder at the wild tales he tells of Corsican love of family, and hate of those who wrong their kindred. A little after they have passed Corte, he points out to her a house nestled in a vineyard upon the hillside, and shaded by a few olive trees.

"Why! It looks like a prison!" cries Enid.

"Yes," says the Count, "for fifteen years the proprietor of it, one Bell Messere, made it his fortress, and left it neither by day nor by night; for Orso della Rocca had sworn against his life a *vendetta*. On the first day of the sixteenth year, Messere ventured out from it, and, within the hour, was brought back a dead man. True Corsicans never forget their vows of vengeance." He looks at Marina who sits opposite to him, but her eyes cannot meet his, and she steals her hand into Anstruther's as if to claim his sympathy and protection.

"What do you tell such frightful stories for, Musso!" says that gentleman. "Don't you see you are frightening the girls?"

"Oh, I think they're lovely, replies Enid. "The people here must be quite like the cowboys Burton tells me about in Texas. A wild murder seems so romantic; you forget its horror in its picturesqueness."

"Perhaps if you had seen one, you might forget the picturesqueness in the horror," remarks her brother, shortly.

At Vivario the party take dinner, and, as the ladies get into their carriage again, some peasant girls throw flowers upon them, for it has become known that one of the Paolis has returned to be married from the home of her fathers. From this time on, their drive is often interrupted by similar offerings; though, curiously enough, Marina seems uneasy under the ceremonies and appears to rather shrink from and dread meeting her country people.

Once two young women, passing them on the road, say something to each other in Corsican *patois*, at which the girl turns pale.

Enid rather curiously asks what the peasants said as they looked towards the carriage.

Musso, laughing, replies, "Some old-fashioned maxim that makes a bride blush; these Corsicans have the manners of England in the time of Smollett."

"Then you needn't translate,'" cries Miss Anstruther, giving a blush herself, for she has read Smollett in the old family library at Beechwood.

The Count's remark would appear to be true, as Marina does not contradict it, but hangs her head as if she were ashamed. Her eyes have a look of anguish in them.

Anstruther would have possibly noticed this, but that gentleman is now seated with the driver, enjoying the scenery, and having discovered that Corsica is a wonderful place for game, is planning a trip with his bride to her estates in the coming winter; where he imagines he can do a little moufflon stalking and partridge shooting, and perhaps spear a wild boar or two in the forests of Calvi.

Nothing more of any great note occurs. Marina appears to have regained her spirits as they drive through the great larch forest of Vizzavona, and in the early evening descending the beech-covered slopes of del Oro, enter the great chestnut woods.

Musso cries, "Bocognano at last! See, there is my house upon the hill. It is comparatively modern, I built it myself," and he points to a stone mansion that is but one story in height, after the manner of all Corsican country dwellings, but otherwise follows the modern French style of architecture. "You all dine with me," he continues, "and afterwards I take you ladies to Marina's home, which, like its mistress, is all Corsican. It is a little further down the mountain and has a lovely view of the Gravona torrent."

In a few minutes they drive up to Danella's country seat, the windows of which blaze with light in welcome. Every preparation has been made to receive them. Over the dinner Musso tells them his plans for the morrow. Anstruther, in true native style, is to carry the bride away with the old-fashioned cavalcade to the church, and afterwards bring her back to the Count's house, which he is to use as his own. "And I think to-morrow," concludes Musso, "that, Mademoiselle Enid, we will be able to show you something you have never witnessed before—a true Corsican wedding, at which we hope to see a true Corsican bride," with this the Count gallantly fills his glass and drinks to Marina.

The young girl says nothing in reply to this; in fact, since Marina has arrived at Bocognano, she has appeared to be depressed and gloomy, and to have lost all her bright vivaciousness of the early part of the day.

Enid, however, who has spirits for two, answers for her, "The bride will be all Corsican, but wait until you see the bridesmaid's costume, M. Danella; if I am not all Corsican to-morrow, there's nothing in a dressmaker. Oh, how I wish Mr. Barnes was here!"

"Yes!" cries Anstruther in great spirits. "Then we could have two weddings at once, eh, Enid?"

Miss Anstruther makes no direct reply

to this, but asks the Count, "Don't you think it curious he never answered your telegram inviting him to the wedding?"

"A little," says Musso slowly, "though Mr. Barnes may be on his way to Corsica now."

"But if so, he missed the steamer at Nice and will be too late!"

"Undoubtedly,—too late!"

"Nonsense, Enid. Barnes is too busy fixing his business for his own wedding to think of any one else's!" cries Anstruther. "Musso, come over to England a month from now; be my guest there as I am yours here; and I'll show you one of our old country marriages from the little church at Beechwood, with a very pretty bride," here he looks at Enid, "and the loveliest lady of the manor in all Britain to preside at the wedding breakfast." He emphasizes the last portion of the speech with such a tender, loyal, loving gaze at his bride of the morrow, that Marina forgets her melancholy in blushes and happiness, and Danella, who has his glass at his lips, grinds his goblet beneath his white teeth.

The dinner is not prolonged, as the ladies are tired, and have still a short drive to Marina's home.

Before they leave, the Count takes his ward aside, saying to her hurriedly, "My steward has been to your house. Have no anxiety. No one will make you unhappy by taunting you for forgetting that your brother's murderer lives."

The girl answers this by a sigh, but presses his hand.

As Edwin puts Marina and Enid in the carriage, the waggon with the luggage drives up.

"Place Anstruther's trunks in my house," says the Count quickly. "The rest follows the ladies," and, as he drives them away, Musso looks with a sardonic grin at Edwin standing on the portico of the mansion smoking his cigar in the moonlight, and old Tomasso who is carrying the little valise marked "G. A." up the steps into the hall.

During their short journey, Danella, who is in high feather, keeps Enid in a running strain of laughter, and even draws, at times, a sad smile from Marina, whose spirits do not seem to rise as she comes near the home of her family.

As they drive up the great avenue leading to her house, the girl hangs her head and mutters to herself, "Ashamed to meet my old servants."

After lifting the ladies from the carriage, and crying to Marina, "Don't be downhearted, *ma belle;* to-morrow the bridegroom cometh! To-morrow we will take you after the manner of the Corsican to Monsieur Anstruther. To-morrow! To-morrow!" the Count drives off into the darkness singing a little song with a laughing refrain.

The two young ladies are received very respectfully by the retainers of the Paoli family; though they hardly display the affection with which Enid had imagined they would greet her young mistress on her return from a long absence, and upon such an occasion.

They are all dressed in Corsican costumes, and light the ladies in with flaming pine torches, making quite a romantic and mediæval effect.

"What an antique ceremony," remarks Miss Anstruther, warming her hands before the burning logs upon the open hearth of the parlour of the house and gazing about the low studded room with its small windows protected by curious old gratings.

Marina, standing out of the light, is tapping her foot impatiently on the oak floor, her lips are quivering, there are tears in her eyes. She is thinking, "Not one man kissed my hand and bade me welcome; not one woman placed her lips on my forehead. And my foster-mother came not to embrace me. Heavens! they are trying to break my heart."

Enid, too much occupied with her novel surroundings to notice her companion's agitation, suddenly ejaculates, "Oh! what a lovely picture!" pointing to the painting Barnes had seen on his visit to the house. "Why, it's you, dear! You'll look like that to-morrow! *Waiting!* How appropriate! Waiting for Edwin."

"No!" cries Marina, "waiting for my dear brother. I can't bear it. I had forgotten it was here. Look at it no more," and she pulls over it the curtains that drape the picture, hiding it from view. Then she gazes pathetically at Enid and says, "Some day, in England, far away from the memory of him, I will tell you Antonio's story; to-night you will excuse me, dear one; you are tired; shall I show you your room? I—I must rest myself; your brother's bride to-morrow must look worthy of him."

As the journey has been a long one Miss Anstruther admits she is fatigued. Marina in person conducts her to her chamber with

several little graceful acts of hospitality peculiar to the island; then, kissing her, whispers, "My sister, pray that I may make your brother happy."

The girls part with a tender embrace; and, leaving Enid, Marina comes to her own room. She has controlled herself before her guest, but now she begins to rage, and her eyes fill with tears of shame and anger. "The miserable ones," she cries; "to dare insult me, their mistress, on my own threshold." She rings a handbell, which is answered by Tomasso, who has just arrived with the ladies' trunks from Danella's.

"Isola, your wife and my foster-mother, why was she not here to welcome me, and take me in her arms, as she always did before?" demands the girl very haughtily, but with a sob in her voice. "I no longer care for affection from those who are ungrateful, but for my bread and my hire I demand service. Send your wife to me to act as my maid."

The old man looks sadly and reproachfully at her as he replies, "That is impossible; Isola heard you were to wed one of the race who killed him. She nursed Antonio at her breast, and so went to the mountains that she might not say words to you that would make you unhappy. Signor Danella has sent a French girl over to take her place; shall I send her to you?"

During this speech Marina had become very pale; she cries, "Send me no one! And look no more on my face until you remember that though you are my foster-father I am your mistress." But after he has gone and she is alone she moans to herself, "My foster-mother will not bless me on my wedding day—fled from my home because I have forgotten my vow. Antonio speaks to me through them. The home where we played together as children cries, 'You forget his wrongs! *You*, a Paoli? You are not even a Corsican!'"

Then this girl, who is now again among associations that teach her revenge is noble, throws herself down by her bedside and sobs as if her heart were breaking, upon this night before the day that should be to her the happiest upon earth.

CHAPTER XXII.

"TO-NIGHT I AM A CORSICAN."

THE sun is well up in the heavens when, next morning, Miss Anstruther, after an exquisite little yawn or two, finds that she has been awakened by Marina's kisses.

"Bride's kisses," she murmurs, and then ejaculates, "Ah! How perfect! How divine!"

For Marina is already in her bridal costume and looks a picture of blushing joy. Save the myrtle flowers that shade her heaving breast everything about her dress is white, but Corsican; the graceful *mandile* ornamenting her dark hair, and the *faldetta* draping her beautiful figure.

"Quick, Enid!" cries the bride. "No more sleep to-day. Rosita will put your native costume upon you and make you a Corsican like me. Hurry, my bridesmaid, if you love me! I go now to receive Danella; during the ceremony he acts as my father." And she runs excitedly to the portico.

A few minutes after Rosita comes to Marina, laughs and says, "The English young lady wishes to see you."

She darts to her, and finding Enid not yet dressed, asks, "What's the matter?"

"Matter!" cries the English girl; "despair's the matter! I've used twenty hairpins, and look at my *mandile*."

"Of course. No one but a native can arrange that," laughs Marina. She seizes Enid, and her dextrous hands soon put the finishing touches to that young lady's toilet.

"Now," she cries, leading her to a mirror, "behold a Corsican!"

"O—ah!" says Enid. "I wonder if my dressmaker thought it was for a fancy ball—it's—it's so awfully short."

"Not at all," answers Marina—"no shorter than mine—and in it you are a fairy."

"Y-e-s, it is becoming," murmurs Enid, taking a meditative blushing glance at herself. "To tell you the truth it's wonderfully fetching; when you're in Corsica do as the

Corsicans do.—All the same, I feel as if I were a ballet girl."

"Then come to breakfast, or the ballet will begin without you," laughs Marina, carrying Enid off, who thinks to herself how Burton would admire her in the dress, and makes up her mind it would be just the costume for an English fancy ball.

Half an hour afterwards, Enid runs into Marina's room crying, "Here's Fra Diavolo himself!" and drags her to the portico; where they see the Count just riding up, dressed in full Corsican costume, an eagle's feather in his hat. He is followed by several young native gentlemen in the gala dress of the island. They are introduced to Enid; and one, a dark-eyed, strong-limbed young man, who is to make the address to the bride, fixes his bright eyes upon Miss Anstruther with an apparent wish to take the place of the absent Barnes.

But he has little time for this, as very shortly after their arrival a great shouting is heard; and a band of goatherds from the Count's estates on the Monte Rotondo, clad in skins and armed with double-barrel guns, come up the avenue, followed by half the peasants of the village of Bocognano, to escort the bride to the house of her husband. For the Count, in order that the ceremony may be conducted in true Corsican form, has placed his mansion for the day in possession of the bridegroom.

A couple of Corsican horses, with bridles and saddles gaily decked with myrtle and ribbons, are led out for the young ladies to ride.

But before the bride is permitted to depart from her home, every one gathers about her to hear the farewell address; that, according to ancient custom, the young cavalier who acts as bridesman makes Marina upon her leaving her native *commune*.

He has been a boyhood friend of her brother, and perhaps a youthful admirer of the girl; and stands before the last of the Paolis conscious of the honour, to make his speech in rough, native eloquence. There is a certain haughty uncultured grace about the young fellow that commands attention, and though Enid does not understand his words, she watches his fervid, vivacious southern gesticulation with an interest that gradually becomes intense as she sees its tremendous effect upon his hearers.

The peasants, who have been laughing and jabbering to each other in their excitable Latin way, become suddenly silent, then look very sad; and, as he goes on, some of the girls and women cry. Danella has a sneer upon his lips when the young man commences, but it changes to a smile of triumph.

Marina looks at the orator for a moment in haughty surprise—a great blush covering her face—then, the red becomes white; she hangs her head as if she could not look this man, who is speaking to her, in the face; her hands involuntarily clench themselves, her limbs tremble, and her heart beats as if torn by some mighty emotion.

At this, the young man makes a little pause; then takes a stride that brings him straight before her; and, catching her eye, cries one short sentence, his voice ringing out in native *patois* like a clarion—his eyes flaming with excitement.

The effect is electrical; the crowd give a wild scream that Enid thinks is more that of rage and hate than applause; and Marina sinks back with a plaintive cry upon the breast of Tomasso, who stands behind his young mistress, and strives to comfort her in his old-fashioned way, but with a very wicked look on his mediæval face.

"What did he say to Marina?" whispers Enid to the Count.

"Oh! a farewell to home! An old Corsican custom!"

"Yes, but what made her so agitated?"

"Oh—ah, well, we are a primitive race, not yet refined; and in fact—you remember what I said to you yesterday, Mademoiselle Enid, about your old-fashioned novelist—his speech had a flavour of the grand Smollett!"

"Oh! the wretch!" cries Miss Anstruther, getting red in the face.

Musso leaves her, and taking the orator aside, seizes his hand, and says, giving him a warm grip, "Bernardo, your address on the idea I suggested to you was a marvel of eloquence—some day I hope to hear you at Paris as a Corsican deputy in the Corps Legislatif!"

In truth, Signor Bernardo Saliceti had seen a great chance in this matter to make a sensation, and, like most untutored, genial, candid young speakers, he has done so with a vengeance, the substance of his last words being nearly as follows, minus the beautiful, soft, southern *patois*, that made half their romance:—

"Marina, when you are gone, none of your loved race will be left to us, save the body of your dead brother, whom we will not bury till he is avenged. I, standing in his place, speak for him. They tell me

that you, his sister, have forgotten his wrongs. Antonio's spirit cries through me, 'It is a lie! Marina marries into the nation who have slain me, that one day she may get within dagger's reach of my assassin.' In that hope we kiss your hand and do you honour, daughter of the Paolis."

The effect of this upon the girl's mind is terrible. Though she forces herself to become calm again, all through that day, whenever Corsican men do her homage, or Corsican girls kiss her hand, or look kindly on her, or make her any little compliment common on such occasions to a bride, she thinks, "They do this, not because I *wed*, but because they hope some day I will *kill*."

After a little the Count distributes among the villagers gifts of money as a souvenir for the *commune*, and whispering to Marina, "Anstruther will be impatient for you," places the bride in her saddle, the same office being done for Enid by young Signor Bernardo, who struts proudly about, feeling that he has distinguished himself, and unmindful of the scornful glance the English beauty gives him, for Miss Anstruther has not forgiven him the address *à la* Smollett she supposes he has made to the bride.

The wedding procession is soon formed in ancient Corsican style. A spinning-wheel, made gay with flowers and ribbons, the emblem of a fruitful marriage, being borne before the bride, and with great firing of guns from the men, and throwing of rice, flowers, fruits, and wheaten spears from the women, they go off on the dusty road, along the little village street, under a great arch of evergreens, brightened with flowers and festooned with gaudy ribbons, and so, with mandolins thumbing at their head, they finally come up the avenue of olive trees that brings them to the Count's great house on the hillside, where a number of country magnates are gathered with the bridegroom, awaiting the coming of the bride.

Unmindful of local etiquette, which in this island sentences the bridegroom to be bashful, Anstruther, the moment he sees Marina, springs down the steps, and, seizing her in his arms, kisses her before the concourse, and calls her his wife so tenderly, that the girl forgets everything in her happiness at the thought that now they need part no more.

Then he stands by her side, his simple English naval uniform in marked contrast to the picturesque native costumes about him, every now and then saying a merry word to Enid or Marina as the usual speeches are made; the Count demanding, in their quaint, ancient way, of the bridesman, if he and his companions are the accepted escort of the gentle lady that they bring with them to his house.

Signor Bernardo, answering for himself and his following, declares that they are friends of the beautiful Marina, and have escorted her from affection, to present her, as the flower of Bocognano, to a noble English gentleman as his spouse, and that they are all good and true men, and no enemies, as they fire their guns with no bullets in them.

The Count, being finally persuaded that they are not bandits, invites Bernardo and his companions to the wedding festivities; and after this the whole concourse go to the little stone chapel in the hamlet, where Marina Paoli becomes the wife of Edwin Anstruther, promising to love him and do him honour, after the ritual of the Holy Roman Church.

A great joy is in the girl's eyes; within her heart the supreme happiness of true love, hallowed by honourable marriage with the object of her passion.

As Gerard takes her in his arms for the first time as his wife, Danella staggers out of the church, and, wiping the damp of agony from his brow, mutters to himself, "Thank God, a man's heart can break but once!" A moment after he raises his face with a smile of cynical triumph upon it, and cries, "*Après la noce!*" for he sees rise up before him the vision of a supreme vengeance upon this man and woman who make him suffer.

Outside, under the shade of some olive trees, the music of the happy but solemn *Benedicite* floating round him from the open doors and windows of the church, sits old Tomasso, a picture of despair.

"She has gone from us—Marina is now English!" he mutters to the Count.

"Her name is no more Paoli," says Danella. "Tomasso, to-night, when the guests leave us, come to me, I have an honour for you; you shall arrange the bridal chamber."

The old man answers this with a nod of his head; he cannot speak, being choked by sobs, the tears streaming down his wrinkled cheeks, for he regards this wedding, by which his young mistress becomes a compatriot with the accursed being who has slain her brother and his foster-son, as a funeral of their family honour.

"Come!" cries Danella. "Come in and kiss your new master's hand, Tomasso!"

"*Maladicta!*" murmurs the old retainer, but he does as he is told, and does homage to both bride and groom; though there is a snarl on his face, for he is still a bloodhound under lash and whip, and as yet has not yet seen his prey.

"Musso, you haven't kissed the bride!" cries Anstruther, looking very tenderly at the blushing creature who is clinging to his arm.

"All in good time," says the Count merrily; "I never fail to collect my fees from beauty," and he goes up and salutes Marina quite ardently, though she wonders why his lips are like ice, and starts as she feels two burning tears fall upon her cheeks. But for all that Musso Danella does not repent.

And, this being over, and the various legal documents being signed both by priest and notary, the crowd goes back again with more firing of guns, and music, and shouting, to the Count's great house, where the banquet is spread for all comers; and that being finished, with much drinking of wine, and speeches of congratulation and joyous laughter—Musso's laugh being loudest of them all—the ball begins, at which the youths and maidens perform the *tarantella*, *marsiliana*, and other national dances, to the music of the *mandoline* and *citera*.

Then, just after the evening has grown dark, the guests with many little peculiar Corsican customs wish the bridal couple good luck and a happy union, and depart along the hill-paths and through the olive and chestnut woods to their homes, as the fires of good omen are lighted on the summits of the neighbouring mountains.

Looking at this, Miss Anstruther says to her brother, "To-day has been to me like a Roman carnival."

"Theatrical, wasn't it!" replies Edwin. "But I've got her—she is mine—and that's enough for my earthly happiness," and he gives a very proud and very fond glance at Marina, who at a little distance from him, on the great portico that fronts the house, is holding a consultation with Danella. "However, since you like romantic effects, Enid, we'll have all the yokels at Beechwood dressed up as American cowboys and backwoodsmen to follow Mr. Barnes and you to church next month, in dear old Hampshire; and may you be as happy and fortunate as I."

"Fancy Diggs, the sexton's, astonishment at cowboys coming up the aisle," laughs Miss Anstruther. "Your idea is worthy of consideration."

Here Marina turns from the Count with a pleased smile on her face, crying, "Musso, you remember everything," and coming to her husband says, "Gerard, a favour!"

"The first one you have asked me, as—"

"As the lord of my life! Is it granted, *Lúce di esistenza mia?*" giving him a pretty Italian love name and a little laugh at the same moment.

"Of course!"

"Very well. This morning, I was thinking so much about you, I forgot to give this to my old servants at my home." She holds up a little purse filled with gold. "Monsieur Danella, who is always thoughtful, suggests that you, my Gerard, ride down this evening and in my name present it to them. As their new master it is an act that will endear you to them!"

"All right! To-morrow, darling!" says Edwin.

"To-morrow! Have you forgotten the excursion with your bride to the forest of Vizzavona," cries the Count, coming towards them.

"It will be more appropriate to-night, Gerard, and I want them to love you. Don't be afraid; when you return I will not have fled from you—*mio adorato!*" says the bride, with a bashful but longing look in her dark eyes.

"Here is your horse I've ordered, brought round for you. My steward will accompany you; he knows the way, and also how much should be given to each of Marina's household," continues the Count, rapidly and earnestly. Then he draws Edwin a little aside; and goes on with a peculiar ring in his voice, "I have placed the left wing of my house at the disposal of you and your bride—when you return, may you be happy! Don't forget Danella's wish was may you be happy!"

"God bless you, Musso, for all you have done for me!" cries Edwin, seizing his hand, and giving it a hearty grasp; but after drawing his fingers from Danella's he finds them cold and clammy from the moisture of intense nervous agitation that covers the Count's hand.

"Don't thank me!—I beg you, do not thank me!" mutters Musso; and he murmurs to himself as he watches Edwin ride down the olive tree avenue—"You are a nice boy. What a cruel pity! But nice boys musn't break Musso's heart—if

they do, Musso is a tiger!" Then he cries aloud, "Marina! How did you feel to-day when looking on the customs of your native land, when surrounded, as in other days, by Corsicans?"

"That I, too, was a Corsican!" answers the bride proudly, a flash of light coming into her gleaming orbs that makes them glow and glitter in the moonlight.

Every local ceremony, every little ancient custom, the native colour he has given to this bridal of the girl, surrounded by the friends and playmates of her youth, amid the romance, traditions, and scenery of her own dear island—all have been planned by Danella's occult mind to produce one effect. What Enid likens to a Roman carnival, what Edwin calls theatrical, inspires his bride with the great passions of her race, love of family and untiring vengeance for the wrongs of kindred. As Musso looks at her face in the moonlight, he knows that his object is attained: to-night Marina Anstruther is again a Corsican.

The time is ripe. He walks into the house and says to Tomasso, who awaits him, "You had better place your master's baggage in the apartment set aside for him." In doing this the old man carries in the valise marked "G. A.." that the Count has looked upon with so much love.

As Tomasso arranges the other articles belonging to Anstruther in the rooms, Danella, attempting to place this valise upon a bureau, by apparent accident, lets it drop upon the floor. It is old and weak, its fastenings give way, and its contents fly out and scatter about the room.

"I am an awkward chap, old Tomasso!" cries the Count. "Help me to pick up Monsieur Anstruther's valuables.'

Tomasso stoops to do so, but has not placed his hand upon more than one or two of the things when he pauses, starts, utters a horrible but suppressed cry, and gazes with a face quivering with intense emotion at what he holds in his hand. He springs up, shoves it before Danella's eyes and mutters, "Tell me what this means?"

"Not till I have read what this reveals to me," says Musso, with a very grave face, gloating over a manuscript that he has taken from the trunk. "Good Heaven, if this is true!"

"You think it possible?" gasps Tomasso.

"Wait!"

"Keep your promise!"

"Wait!"

"Keep your promise you made me on the Virgin!" hisses the Corsican.

"I never break my word," returns the Count. "I once made covenant with you, my sturdy old hater, that when I discovered——"

"To give to me the name of the accursed murderer of my foster-son—I see by your face you know it now."

"Not to-night! To-night would be too horrible!"

"Now! or I will have *your* blood also!" snarls the old man in a menacing whisper.

"Listen!" says the Count, and in a low voice he begins to translate into Corsican the writing he has taken from the valise, and to produce certain articles from the trunk of Gerard Anstruther and to place them side by side with one or two things he selects from Marina's baggage, and as he does so, the eyes of old Tomasso, like a bloodhound that sees before him his prey, grew red and shining.

As this is going on, the two girls sit on the portico looking at the shadows of the great mountains, made by the rising moon, that darken the white river of the Gravona which rushes between them to the tropical sea, and talk in low, happy voices of this day that has made one of them a bride.

Enid, as she gazes on this scene filled with southern romance, and thinks of the *fête* that to-day with its mediæval effects and colour has carried her back to the feudal ages, whispers, "To-night, I wonder is there an England? It seems so far away."

"To-night, pray that we go there soon," cries Marina, with an entreaty almost piteous in her voice. "Pray that I stay not here in this my native island. Pray for your brother's sake, pray that I stay not here."

Enid looks at her astonished; but at this instant the Count comes out on the portico, and with a face that is palid and a voice that in spite of himself trembles, not from fear, but from triumph, says, "Madame Anstruther, your apartments are at last prepared for you—they have just been furnished from Paris, and are worthy a bride. You will find them in the left wing."

Marina looks down the avenue and murmurs, "My husband will be returning, kiss your sister, Enid, my own one, good-night."

As they kiss, the English girl whispers, "What did you mean by those curious words!"

"Mean?" cries Marina, proudly, "I mean that to-night I am a Corsican, and long for revenge."

Then breaking away from Enid's arms, she flies into the house and along the great corridor. Enid springs after her, but, reach-

ing the door of her apartment, the bride turns as if at bay, the light from out the nuptial chamber haloing her beauty, as with one bare, white, dazzling arm raised up as if to warn her friend away, and the other draping the *faldetta* of shimmering satin about her girlish figure, she stands like the Peri at the gate of Paradise; her face, an angel's, purified of all the passions of this earth, save one which keeps the door of Heaven for ever closed against her.

She cries, "Ask me no more, dear Enid. Again, good night!" throws a light kiss with her hand, and, passing in, the curtains fall behind her.

The Count is looking on; his face has a cynical smile, though a moment before as he gazed on Maria's loveliness, his eyes were full of burning tears, and his hands were twitching from unutterable misery. He says, "Mademoiselle Anstruther, we Corsicans are a curious race!"

"So I should imagine," replies Enid, with a little laugh, though there is a perplexed look upon her face.

"Ah," grins Musso, "you judge us by Marina; but Marina is a bride, and brides —are—are peculiar. What would you think, my dear Mademoiselle Enid, if I, inspired by this moonlight, became romantic and said to you I loved you?"

"I should think it was time to go to bed," replies Enid, somewhat puzzled and a little haughty.

"Precisely," murmurs the Count who had got the answer he wanted; "will you permit my housekeeper to show you to your apartments, they are in the right wing." He rings the bell.

"Thanks, certainly," replies the English girl. "Good-night!"

"Good-night," bows the Count; and, as he turns away, he wonders, "How will she look when I say to her, 'Good-morning?'"

As Enid follows the servant to her room, she sees Danella wander out on the portico, peering longingly down the avenue, and notices, with a shudder, that in the moonlight, his eyes shine like those of a tiger lurking at night for his prey.

* * * * *

It is noon upon the day of the wedding, before the felucca upon which Barnes has sailed for Corsica, makes the headlands of the Gulf of Ajaccio, and nearly two hours afterwards before he lands upon the little quay; though captain and crew have all done their duty like men, for these hardy Italian sailors, half fishermen, half-coasters, began to pity, in their rough way, this man who became more haggard and more careworn each hour that calms or adverse winds kept him from the port he fought so hard to reach, and therefore never shirked a pull at sheet or rope that might give greater speed or better pointing to their little vessel. And so, notwithstanding adverse weather, at two o'clock on the day of Marina's nuptials, which is earlier by twenty hours than the steamer from Marseilles which leaves that morning from the French port, would put him there, Mr. Barnes stands in de Belloc's little office in the garrison of Ajaccio.

At first, that officer does not recognise him; and, after he mentions his name, cries out, "*Mon Dieu!* What has happened to you, my friend?" for Barnes' appearance is careworn, his face haggard and unshaved, and his clothes damp with the salt water of his sea voyage.

As he tells his story, Captain de Belloc gives a low whistle of astonishment, then his face grows long. He summons a sergeant and gives some orders hurriedly, and when Barnes has finished, says, "You had better have a file or two of soldiers with you; it may be a matter that will require the police or military! I am in command here and will myself go with you!"

"What I was about to request," replies Barnes; "you saw the duel; and, as her brother's second, can tell Marina it was an equal and fair combat. But I have already sent on an express ahead of me for horses, and your men will not be able to keep up with my fresh mounts!"

"Very well!" says de Belloc, "I'll follow—are you armed?"

"No! I intended to procure weapons after I had seen you."

"Permit me to arrange that matter," returns the officer. He goes out; comes back with a couple of revolvers and hands them to the American, saying, "I wouldn't care to be our friend Danella, if you think it necessary to shoot at him. But you are anxious to get on your way—I'll be not far behind; so *au revoir!*"

As Barnes rides out of the town he hears the cavalry bugles sounding, "Boot and saddle." He passes quickly on, over the Bastia road, leaving to his right the little inn of *Il Pescatore*, where a year ago took place the duel that causes such wretched misery now; and, sparing neither his horse nor himself, rides desperately up the valley of the Gravona, upon whose banks high in the hills just under the shadow of del Oro, the woman he loves is; perhaps

needing his aid to save herself or her brother from cruel assassination. As this thought comes to him, he drives the rowels deeper into his steed. And, in the evening, seeing the nuptial fires upon the hills, he knows that Edwin and Marina are now one, and mutters to himself, "Am I too late?" Soon after, meeting some peasants on the road returning from the *fête*, he learns that the wedding party are all at Danella's. And so it comes to pass that about ten minutes *before* Anstruther returns to the Count's house, Barnes rides up the avenue of olive trees, and pauses in the shadow of the mansion.

There are no lights in the front windows, but the American, having spent some days with the Count at this country seat on his first visit to the island, knows that all the sleeping apartments of the house are at the back. He hesitates now to arouse the household, as he fears his unexpected coming in this desperate way may precipitate the catastrophe, or bring about some unforeseen complication that he cannot combat until he learns the present details of this awful social problem. Not for one instant, however, does he think that all is right, for he never forgets Danella's words: "*Lure him to Corsica!*"

As he meditates he is dismounting and tying his horse to one of the trees in the shade just a little out of the avenue. A thought comes to him—he will pass to the back of the house, there he may find some domestic who remembers him—for the American had been very popular with the Count's household on his former visit—and so gain entrance and knowledge.

The house consists of two long wings of comparatively modern erection, and a main building more ancient in its construction, which connects the two and retreats in a long line of kitchen and servants' offices, making the general form of the mansion hat of a great T, the top of the letter being the front of the house, and facing the avenue; the arms, the two wings and the shank, the servants' quarters that cut off all view of the windows in the back of the left wing from those in the rear of the right.

The entrance to the servants' quarters is on the right, consequently Barnes passes round that side of the building upon his way to them. He does this quietly, and arriving there finds all dark; not a servant stirring after the labour of that day, which had been great.

But as he turns away, debating what next to do, a light issuing from a window in the right wing catches his eye, and approaching it softly he gazes in and sees what makes his heart beat with a wild joy.

The window is but four feet from the ground, and being half open—as the night is warm—permits a perfect view of all the room. It is a luxurious litle chamber, and within it, the mellow light of a few wax candles beaming on her, sits, at an ornamental table, the girl he loves, a happy smile on her fair face, writing—perchance to him. The white glistening silk and satin draped in the picturesque folds of the costume of Corsica hang about the girl in unstudied beauty. Being alone her attitude has a lazy abandon; one perfect ankle in its silken stocking and one little foot in its dainty slipper peeping out into the light which flashes on her white arms and maiden bust as she raises the paper to her lips, gives a little blush, kisses it and murmurs, "For *him*." Had Barnes time he would linger on the lovely picture, but in his mind there is but one thought. This being, the fear of losing whom has shown him how greatly he loves her, knows of no evil to her brother, and, above all, herself is safe.

He gently calls her by a little name that will tell her who he is, for he wishes to save her as much as possible the great shock he feels must fall upon her soon.

At his voice coming through the open casement Enid starts and trembles; but as he repeats her name she is up and at the window with a wonderful happiness on her face, murmuring, "My own! Here? How astonishing! How marvellous! How delightful! Welcome!" and stooping down places her fair lips to his. Then seeing the disorder of his dust and travel-stained attire, and the lines of care these last three days have left upon his unshaven and haggard face her own becomes white, and she gasps, "Good Heavens! Has misfortune come to us?"

"Listen," says Barnes, "and do not interrupt me, but answer my questions straight, for seconds may now mean"—he takes her hand in his to give her comfort—"your brother's life."

She gives a little shudder, but obeying his instruction says with pale lips, "Ask."

"Did you attempt to postpone your brother's marriage as I telegraphed you?"

"A telegram! I never got it."

"You came through Bastia?"

"Yes, on Thursday morning, by steamer from Nice."

"The infernal villain!" mutters Barnes, and then he suddenly astounds Enid by saying, "Go and tell your brother I must see him at once."

"I dare not," whispers the girl.

"Then I'll go myself. Where is he?" returns Barnes, springing in the window.

But she seizes his arm and ejaculates, "Are you mad? He'd hate you for ever! This is his wedding night."

"There is no time for sentiment. It is life and death—and quick life and death, too. Darling, be brave while I explain something too horrible almost for belief, but still, Heaven helps us all, the truth." He takes her in his arms to give her courage, and tells the girl shortly and quickly why he has travelled day and night without sleep or rest to reach Corsica in time. And as he does so Enid shivers as he holds her, and trembling cries, "Have mercy on them; this will break both their hearts."

But when he speaks of Marina's vow and what he fears may happen to her brother the girl starts from and looking at him wildly, gasps, "You are insane! Kill Edwin? *She?*—as well ask me if I would kill you. Whatever Danella does, be sure of Marina. She does not know."

"Not to-day, perhaps," says Barnes, examining his revolvers and carefully testing both trigger and cylinder—"And I must be by your brother's side before she does, for to-night, as I believe I live, I believe Danella will tell her. He loves Marina; he has lost her, and he has the passions of a—— *Good God! she knows now.*"

And the two start and gaze upon each other in awful silence. The next instant the American has passed through the door, and is rushing along the hall towards the left wing, for, as he has spoken, there came through the stillness of the night a scream, such as Barnes had heard when Marina was bereft before, save that to despair was added the wild ring of some unnatural horror that might in an instant change a bride into a maniac.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BRIDAL CHAMBER.

As the curtains of the bridal chamber fall behind Marina, the girl is too happy to thoroughly appreciate the luxury of the apartment she has entered. It is a room with many little nooks and retreats in its walls, and a great window at the back, through which a faint moonlight streams in to aid the burning wax tapers which illuminate it, throwing curious shadows on its polished floor, and rendering lustrous the heavy draperies that hang about it.

Its oaken floor is covered with soft rugs, but they are all skins of wild beasts; its walls are decorated, but only with weapons and spoils of the chase; its furniture is in exquisite imitation of the rude arts of bygone days. All is beautiful, but barbaric; for Danella has too subtle a mind to destroy, by any reminder of this modern world, the effect of this day's pageant, that has carried the bride back to her old life and old traditions.

It is a room in which a painter would depict some old tragedy of feudal days, when men were barbarous and women were cruel.

For the moment all this is unnoticed by her. There is but one thought in the girl's mind—she is bride to the man of her heart. She is happy.

She prays, "God make me a good wife," and sits down in dreamy bliss to take the *mandile* from her hair, and throws its lustrous masses over her shining shoulders. But, as she does this, though the little details are unheeded, still one general impression of the apartment comes to her. How beautiful are its draperies! Mediæval as if woven by ancient looms, the silken hangings completely drape the two entrances—the one, by which she came in from the great hall, and the other, towards which she steals a glance once or twice with a quick blush, for she guesses it

is the one by which Edwin will come to her. These tapestries hang in heavy folds and fall in ample overplus, making great billows of silk and satin on the polished floor, and conceal entirely from her view the oaken doors behind them. The large bay-window at the back is curtained in the same rich manner, though the draperies are drawn up in graceful festoons, showing through the open casements the distant mountain shadows, and in the foreground the soft moonlight.

Stealing from out this moonlight, right under her window, comes to her a weird, horrible, native song of murder and revenge.

Tomasso is singing the *Rimbecco* to Marina as she sits in her bridal chamber.

At first, in her happiness, she hardly notices its signification, but, as it grows upon her, her eyes become full of tears, for it tells of the brother she has lost—the one that should be here this night to make her doubly happy. And then, as its awful import strikes home to her—for now she realises what it means—she starts, trembles, and, coming to the window, says piteously, "Tomasso, why do you break my heart? If any hear you, I am reproached for ever. How dare you brand me with the *Rimbecco* upon my wedding night?"

The old man answers with another strophe more horrid than the last, chanting it in a hoarse, angry voice.

"Away!" cries the girl, desperately. "Away! or I will scourge you from my window."

At this two blood-red eyes look at her from the moonlight, and Tomasso hisses to her, "I will not away, for he is here!" and this horrible old man begins to climb in the window.

"Are you mad?" screams Marina, trying to fight him back.

But in spite of her struggles, he forces his way in, muttering fiercely. "Mad? Not I! But when *you* learn the news, *you* will be mad! Woe to you! Woe to you, Marina!"

"No, it is woe to you, if my husband"—she utters the words bashfully but lovingly—"finds you here and I tell him your insult, he will kill you!"

"To-night, *I* am the killer!"

"*You?*"

"Yes, *I!* Upon the body of Antonio we both made oath of the *vendetta!* You have forgotten, I remember! You would save him—I would kill him!"

The girl looks at the man a moment and seeing the wild glitter of his eye, thinks him insane. Then hearing a step upon the floor of the hall, opens the curtains of the door, crying, "Come to me, this man is crazy!" thinking she is calling her husband. But instead, Count Danella enters, a cigarette between his teeth, that he chews perhaps a little nervously, and bowing, says, "What can I do for you, Marina?"

She answers by pointing to Tomasso, who stands confronting her.

On seeing the old man, Musso gives a pretended start of surprise and ejaculates, "You here? Did I not tell you in mercy to her,"—he points to Marina—"to go away!—her bridal night!—It is too horrible."

"Never will I go—while he lives!" cried the old Corsican.

The words of the Count frighten Marina. Tomasso may be insane, but Danella is cool, calm and collected. She grows pale and asks, "My bridal night? Too horrible? What do you mean?"

"I mean," says Musso, very slowly, "that to-night an awful accident has taken place by which was revealed to this man, who is a true Corsican and loves your brother, soul and body, something that I knew—a secret—that since you have wed him—I would have buried in my heart for ever—poor Marina——"

"Since I have wed *him?* A secret you would have buried? There can be but *one!*"

"And taken with me into the grave. A secret I would have told you that day at Monte Carlo, but you forbade me to reveal to you the name of the English officer who killed Antonio; and when you said you loved him, I dared not."

"Dared not *tell!*" ejaculates Marina, and then suddenly cries harshly, "My God!—you mean? What do you mean?" And growing very pale, strides up to Danella and gasps, "No more insinuations. If you never spoke the truth before, tell me the truth now."

"As Heaven is my judge!"

"The truth! Quick!"

"Then if I must. To-night, Tomasso Monaldi, your foster-father and the dead's, discovered that the assassin of your brother, Antonio Paoli, was your husband, Edwin Gerard Anstruther."

If Musso wants revenge he has it now.

Marina does not faint, which would be mercy to her and spoil the *finesse* of Danella's plans; but staggers, as from a shot, and clutching a table that is near, supports

herself, her eyes rolling in awful horror as she gasps, "No! No! God is merciful! Edwin! My husband! It cannot be! I'll not believe!"

"Believe? It is true as the *Credo*," mutters Tomasso.

After a spasm or two she grows deathly calm, though her limbs shiver like aspens, and sighs, "But I must know before he comes," then cries, "*The proofs!—before I go mad and cannot judge.*"

At this the bridal chamber becomes a torture chamber, all speaking under their breaths, interrupted only by short spasms of faintness and gasps of pain from the victim when the torment is too potent, as Danella racks her, *by proving it is true.*

"I had feared this," he says, his soft Italian voice a little more musical than it is wont to be, "and am prepared. Behold, the transcript from the English Admiralty at Gibraltar, showing Anstruther was on board the *Vulture* as extra officer, that fatal morning in Ajaccio," and as her hand trembles so she cannot take the document, holds it that she may read.

"Yes. He was there," she says piteously; then with sudden defiance, "but that's not evidence he killed!"

"Look at these things taken from his trunk that fell and broke open on the floor," replies the Count, with a shrug of his shoulders, showing her a silver crown with a piece of lead flattened against and made part of it. "See! The lucky money that saved your Gerard's life!"

"And still clinging to it, my brother's bullet," gasps Marina. "But it may have come from some other fight. You may not have found it where you say. Do you think I will believe *easily* what will be my death!"

"With these two hands I took it from the assassin's trunk. What! You, fighting for this villain? You—a Paoli?" cries Tomasso in a savage voice.

She does not answer this. She knows it is true. Tomasso never lies, but says to the Count hoarsely, "*More proofs!*"

"Lots!" replies Musso cheerily, for his triumph at times conquers his *finesse.* "This pistol—look—is the duplicate of this broken one your brother clutched in his death agony. You know it well! You gazed at it each day, till love made you forget—Compare!" He holds the two before her eyes.

"The same!" she groans.

"And on the handle of this other one, this pistol that killed your brother, is an inscription."

And forcing her to read, she sees; her eyes grow large with horror, and this poor tortured girl cries unto Heaven, "My God! My husband's name!—My name *now!* My name *now!*"

"Is that enough?" Danella softly asks; for she is wringing her hands and swaying as if she would faint.

"Enough? Do you think I am anxious to believe? Give me all! I'll not despair till I have *all!*"

"Then here is certainty," says the Count softly, but very impressively, and holding up a paper, "Certainty. This document. You saw me take it from his trunk, Tomasso?"

"Ay! that I did! It is his death-warrant!" mutters the old man. "Tell it to her, that she may do her duty!"

Then from this sheet of paper that bears some signs of age, Danella reads:

"H. M. S. *Sealark*, July 11, 1882.
"Alexandria.
"Being wounded and about to die——"

"Yes, wounded and about to die!" echoes Marina. "That was the time in Egypt." A dreamy light comes in her eyes, and, as in a trance, she murmurs, "He thought he was about to die—but I nursed my darling till I tore death from him; for I loved him—he was my own—my dear one—I was happy!—*Happy?*" The last is a scream of awful recollection, and the girl cries out in fitful despair, "In mercy, don't let me think! Go on! Some one was wounded and about to die—Who!—Oh, Heaven! My head!" and presses her hands to her brow, and begs piteously, "Go on, while I am sane!"

The Count continues,

"Being wounded and about to die, I make this statement, in case of court-martial, to exonerate Charles Marion Phillips, H.M. Navy, who acted as my second in a duel at Ajaccio——"

He gets no further; Marina has the paper from him, glares at it, and screams, "His writing! Enough! I believe! *My husband killed my brother! Let me die before he comes!*"

"When he comes there's other work than dying for you, little Marina!" cries old Tomasso, producing a long, sharp, Corsican stiletto, that he plays with and caresses; for now, having broken his leash, this bloodhound has gone wild and become a wolf.

"Here's a little collateral evidence," says the Count. "This telegram from the American. He knows Anstruther is your brother's murderer, and forbids this marriage," and he shows her the dispatch from Barnes.

"And *you* intercepted it?" Marina cries. "Infamy! You let me wed the man I should have hate! *You*, who should have guarded me! *You*, who once swore you loved me!"

"*Once!*" echoes Danella.

"Ah, that day at Monte Carlo!" she sobs. "Could you not see how I loved him? Could you not see how he loved me? And now!—*Now!!*—NOW!!!——"

"Perhaps it would have been pleasanter to have married me?" sneers Musso.

At last the girl realises the subtle baseness and incarnate cruelty of this man whom she had once respected, nay, almost loved; a shudder of loathing and disdain thrills her, and she answers, "No! No! Even *this* is better than *that*. Are you human, and did not tell me before?"

"You forget you threatened that if I dared to tell the truth, your British hero would crush my monkey frame as if I were a mosquito. Do you remember? A mosquito! But mosquitoes have stings!" and Danella lets himself loose, cheers her with a cruel laugh, and continues, "Never break a man's heart. It is a dangerous thing, *petite*. You robbed me of yourself—I rob you of him."

"Of him! My husband! that I must never see again on earth! My Edwin! for if I looked upon his face I should forget he is the murderer of Antonio—and forgive!" she sobs, though without tears, and then cries out desperately, "*Gerard mio!* My life! my soul! my love! I pluck you from my heart with my wedding flowers! May God forgive your crime!" With this, tearing her myrtle blossoms from her bosom, she sighs, "*This* is my bridal night!" and sinks down stunned with despair.

The Count murmurs to himself, "The bridegroom will be coming soon. *Per Bacco!* What a meeting!" and steals to the door of the hall-way, by which he had entered. But there he pauses, for he sees Tomasso, holding the gleaming stiletto, stride down and give Marina's bare white shoulder a sounding slap with his rude hand, such as at other times would make her scream from pain, crying, "Bride! Wake up! There's work for you, brave heart!" then forcing the dagger into her grasp, drags her before a picture of her brother he has hung upon the wall, and under which the count has written two words, "*Assassinato! Abbandonato!*" as he hisses, "Assassinated by *him!* Abandoned by *you!* Daughter of the Paolis, remember your oath!"

Misery had for a moment stupefied her; but now she notices the gleaming weapon in her hand. It fascinates her eye as she begins to tremble and shiver, and says, "For him? You want me to kill my husband?" a new horror coming into her face, for in the agony of losing this man she worships, she has forgotten her vow *to slay him.*

"Are you a Corsican, and ask? Have you forgotten your oath and your honour?" hisses Tomasso.

Then Marina begins to laugh to herself, as if it were a funny thing, and cries, "He'd think it was a softer stab from my hand. What's one more horrid thing to-night to me?" Then doubtless for a little time misery makes this girl insane.

Standing at the door, feasting upon her loveliness and her despair, Danella mutters to himself, "The bridegroom's agony is to come. He who stole her from me," and chuckles and grins and laughs. "If I could only see their meeting—Could not I?" Then thinks a moment and says, "Of course!" At this instant to his ears comes the sound of a horse's hoofs flying up the avenue. He grins again, "The bridegroom is impatient; I must be quick or I shall miss this rare sport!" then hurries away along the dark hall with cautious footsteps and disappears.

Tomasso looks in gloomy admiration at Marina, who is pacing the chamber like a savage beast waiting for her prey, now and again glancing at her brother's picture, and groaning and clinching her hands. He cries, "*Brava!* There's death in your eye, my mistress! In you the honour of the Paolis is safe! Remember your brother's dying agony! Remember you are a Corsican and can hate as well as love!"

"Yes! He killed him! He did not spare the brother of my childhood! Then why should I? To-night I am a Corsican, I hate!" mutters the girl, her eyes beginning to sparkle with unholy lustre as they did on the beach at Ajaccio.

"Ah! Now, you are Marina," crones Tomasso. "Now you are the little girl I carried in my arms; the little darling who used to play with young Antonio in the chestnut woods, and throw the myrtle flowers upon him on *fête* days—poor Antonio, who even as he died called your

name with his last breath in welcome. And will you let his murderer live?"

"Never!" screams the girl, "never!"

"This English tiger will not suspect his bride—Remember on the left side is his heart!" the old man says to her as she paces the floor.

But in her walk the girl suddenly stops and points at the other entrance to the room; which, not as yet used, stands with its ample curtains down, completely hiding its door from view, and whispers, "There is the place by which he'll enter to receive my kisses! *Kisses!* Ha! ha! ha!" She gives a little cruel laugh and cries, "Bride's kisses!—Sweet bride's kisses for the husband!—Sharp bride's kisses for the assassin!" then raises her dagger as if she could not wait his coming. And suddenly starts and listens; then mutters, "Quick! I think I hear his footsteps! But one man has a right to enter my bridal chamber.—It is he, my husband!" and takes a step as if to meet him. But doing so falters, with a sob in her voice, "My God! if I look upon his face—my Gerard's face—I could not kill!" and then cries out desperately, "I'll not see him through the drapery! *He dies when he reaches the curtains!*" As she says this, she takes her stand by them with flaming eye and knife uplifted ready to stab.

"Pity him not!" hisses Tomasso. "You have a right to his life! You saved it in Alexandria!"

He wants her to kill, but these are not the words to make her slay Gerard Anstruther, for they cause her to remember.

"In Egypt—far-off Egypt—in that hot pestilential hospital," murmurs the girl as in a trance, "I feel his wounded arms about me, my Gerard!—and I see the grateful yearning of his blue eyes, as I moistened his fevered face, fought death for him, and won him!—He was my own!—In Egypt, I saved, and I was happy! I placed my lips upon his brow, and I loved him!—*Loved* him!" She gives a great cry, I love him still! He is my husband! Coming to me, his *bride!*—And I would have killed him?" She utters the last in a tone of horror, then cries, "Heaven forgive me, I was mad!"

She lowers her stiletto.

Her face and her actions make Tomasso suspicious; he screams to her, "Remember your oath!"

"Yes! The one I swore at the altar to-day! *To be his wife!*" is her answering cry.

"But I remember my *vendetta!*" he hisses, advancing to take the dagger from her.

Then she turns upon him with flashing eyes, and standing, her back to the curtains, cries, "Away! you who would have tempted me to eternal infamy and remorse!"

"You will not kill?"

"My husband? As soon assassinate my God!"

"Then I will do it for you!—I hear him coming!—Give me the stiletto!" whispers Tomasso, about to seize the weapon.

But Marina, her eyes filled with dauntless resolution, cries, "Back! or I kill *you!* He is my husband! Against you; against the world; against my vow; *him I defend!*" and uplifting the dagger stands nerved to strike this human panther as he comes towards her.

Thus posed, the girl, the soft moonlight falling on her as she leans slightly back, one white arm stretched in unconscious grace across the red drapery of the curtains; the other with the gleaming knife, held high above her head, might be a statue of despair and resolution; despair, because Marina knows whether Anstruther lives or dies, from this night forth, to her, he is as dead; resolution, because, if necessary, for his life she will give her own.

Tomasso pauses; not fearing death, but fearing it ere he does his mission; for he is conscious that this beautiful statue before him, motionless and quiet as a serpent coiled to spring, will, when she strikes, be fatal.

Then, with sudden cunning, he whispers, "Too late! *Maledicta!* He is here!—Look!" and points behind her.

Marina turns her head to meet her husband's face, just for an instant; but in that instant, Tomasso is upon her. Her soft arms are like wax in his tough embrace. Like a flash, he has the dagger from her, and, forcing her back over a little sofa standing near, with one strong arm upon her white, panting throat, he hisses, "Traitress!" and stands in her place beside the curtains, with knife upheld in his other hand, ready to strike the instant Anstruther's breast presses against the drapery; for he knows in open fight, armed or unarmed, he would be such a baby in that sturdy young Englishman's grasp.

He has little time for thought, however, for even now he hears steps coming along the passage to this door; and Marina, who has been struggling silently, now speaks,

trying to smile upon him as he holds her down, and says, gasping a little, for his grasp upon her throat is strong, "Dear old Tomasso, are you not going to let your foster-daughter fulfil her vow? Forget not I am a Paoli!—Give me the stiletto! Let me do my work!"

But the old man answers with a surly growl, shaking his head, "No fox is trapped twice! Look at the sight you have so longed to see—the death of Antonio's murderer!" and prepares to strike, for the steps are very near.

"Spare him! Don't kill him before my eyes! Dear old Tomasso, who never refused your little Marina before—Mercy for him! Pity for me! Don't make me a widow on my wedding night," begs the girl wildly, and tries to kiss and fondle the hand upon her throat. Then, for the coming footsteps make her frantic, she begins to struggle and fight like a tiger-cat the strong arm that holds her down, and cries out desperately, "Keep back, Gerard! My husband, for the love of your wife, back! He is waiting to stab you! For God's sake, *the other way!*"

But these are no words to keep a bridegroom from his bride—they rather bring him quickly to her aid—for even as Marina speaks, she hears in awful horror the door behind the curtains open; she sees his dear form outlined against the drapery, and like the lightning, Tomasso strike, with all his strength, the shining blade twice through the canopy deep into the heart she loves. A stream of something red and warm spurts through the knife rents; two hideous hollow groans come from behind the curtains that rustle and quiver and wrap themselves about a body, as it crashes to the floor.

Tomasso, still holding the crimson dagger, strides to the open window to escape.

Marina, staggering after him, cries, "You've killed the husband, now kill the wife who loves him! Kill his *widow!*"

But he shouts back hoarsely, "For the honour of the Paolis!" and disappears.

While she, bereft upon her bridal night, turns to stagger to her dead husband; and seeing trickling from beneath the silken draperies a bright red stream that slowly crawls along the oaken floor from out the shadow into the moonlight, groans out in mocking laughter, "I should be happy; here is what I prayed for!" then screams like a mad woman, "THE BLOOD OF THE VENDETTA!" and falls motionless and senseless as the thing that lies quiet and dead behind the curtains of the bridal chamber.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

IT is this scream which comes to Barnes and Enid, and a few seconds after the American's knock is heard upon the hall door of the apartment. Getting no answer, he dashes in, followed by the English girl, and sees Marina fainting upon the floor.

Enid runs to her, crying, "She is dead!" and taking her in her arms with many sweet words and caresses; for, loving her as a sister, she doubts not his bride's affection and loyalty to her brother.

Barnes pauses, looking about the room trying to divine what has happened, and perhaps guessing only too well; for when a moment after he comes to Enid's side, his face is curiously agitated though his voice is calm. He has rung the bell for assistance, but gets no answer for two good reasons, first, the servants who sleep in the distant ell of the building have all gone to bed; and second, Danella has cut the bell-rope leading from the room.

He lifts Marina up and places her on a sofa. Then, in answer to Enid's agonized question, "If this has happened to her, what has befallen my brother?" says very quietly, "In a few minutes she will revive. Keep cool until she can tell us."

"But she is dead!"

"No more than you! She has received a shock. This is only a trance. You know I was educated as a doctor."

"Yes."

"Then for this night I act as one. Bring me that water-jug," replies Barnes, attempting cheerfulness and devoting himself to calling Marina back to her senses. "Now, little woman, some smelling salts or ammonia, if you can find any."

"There's some in my room—but my brother?"

"Run and get the ammonia!"

"But my brother?"

"The ammonia! Quick!

As Enid goes off on her errand, Mr. Barnes looks after her and thinks, "Best keep my darling moving." Then, "No time for anxiety. To-night—Heaven help us—I fear there's as cruel a shock for Anstruther's sister as the one that has brought his wife to this."

He gazes at Marina. She lies before him, very quiet and pale. Lines of intense suffering are about her mouth that now and again by a nervous quiver gives a faint sign of life. As he does so, a horrified expression comes into his face; for, on the skirt of her white bridal dress is a bright red spot: and, looking again more closely, he finds another. From her skirt, his eyes go to the floor; and he mutters—"Blood! She has marks upon her neck, but is not wounded. Whose blood is it? It comes from under those curtains!" Starting up, he is about to examine and discover, when Enid's return stops him. While she is in the room, he dares not investigate, fearing what he may find will be too great a blow to Edwin Anstruther's sister. So thinking very hard what is best to do, he tries with all the limited resources at his command to bring sense back to Marina.

In a few minutes, perceiving the signs upon her face which precede returning animation, he rises from the Corsican's side and says quietly to Enid, "Dear one, will you do me a favour? I do not wish this young lady to see you immediately on recovering consciousness. Will you go to your room and trust me to do all that is necessary in this matter?" He takes her hand in his very tenderly.

"You fear?"

"Yes, I fear—the effect upon her—of seeing you."

"No! No! You dread the shock to me. You fear for my brother. Do you suppose I suffer less not knowing, than knowing? Why do you always stand between me and those curtains? There's something horrible in this room! Something you discovered while I was gone—something you dare——" But Enid stops here with a suppressed shriek, for Marina rising partially from the couch, interrupts her by muttering in a dazed way, "*Bride and Widow!*" and then wrings her hands despairingly.

Enid would run to her, but Barnes places his arm about her, holds her trembling to him; and the two watch Marina, who rolls her eyes around the room, and after a moment stands upon her feet, though tottering from weakness.

In a moment she sees the American, and horrifies him; for, she says, in a voice of unnatural calmness, though trembling a little from faintness, "You, here? You came to save us, but you did not come in time. What have you done with his body?"

"His body?" echoes Barnes, with a very grave face, holding Enid close, for he fears she will faint.

But his sweetheart is made of better stuff: she tears herself from his arms and confronts Marina, crying, "Whose body? Good Heaven! Not my brother's? Not Edwin's?"

"Yes, your brother's and my husband's!" answers Marina, and then goes into an awful paroxysm of anguish, screaming in despair—"My husband, that I loved, murdered before my eyes! I hear his footsteps now!"—coming to my arms!—coming to his death!"—and mutters, "Listen! Footsteps!—his footsteps! They sound always in my ears—coming—for ever coming!—Coming! Coming! Coming!" and with that takes a stride to Barnes and screams, "Don't you hear them too?"

"By Heavens! Yes, footfalls upon the hall floor!" says Barnes.

"I know his step! It is Edwin," cries Enid.

"Yes, the footsteps of the dead," mutters Marina.

"No! of the living!" screams Enid, and rushes to the door that leads from the hall into the arms of Edwin Anstruther, who comes hastily in with a flush of eager happiness upon his face to meet his bride.

For a moment, the young man is more astounded than they are.

He says, "You here, Enid!" with a surprised look, and then gasps, "Marina!

What's the matter?" for his bride has made a step or two towards him, her eyes big with unearthly horror, and looking at his face has screamed, "*His spirit come to reproach me with his death!*"

As she shrinks trembling from him, he attempts to take her in his arms, saying, "Dear one—don't you know me—your husband!"

But she gets back from him, motioning him away, and astonishes them all by crying, "You are not my husband? You are his spirit! My husband's body lies behind those curtains!" She stands with uplifted arm a moment pointing to the draperies through which Tomasso has stabbed, and then her eyes gaze in fondness at Edwin, and she mutters, "If I could be a spirit too!" Now, after the grave has washed your hands of his blood, I could still love you, darling of my soul, without shame to my brother; though you killed him!" Saying this, she gazes in love upon him like the Marina of old.

"Heaven help me," gasps Anstruther, "My bride is mad!"

"No!" says Barnes, shortly, going to him, "but she soon will be, if this continues."

"Who are you?" asks Edwin, seeing him for the first time.

"Thank God! You do not know me; but my name is Barnes," replies the American, who since Anstruther's entrance has looked at him earnestly and curiously, and uttered a great sigh of relief.

"Ah! My sister's sweetheart."

"Yes, I came here to-night to prevent this—I'll explain afterwards. Your sister and I heard a scream, and coming here found your wife fainting. She thought you had been murdered."

"I! Impossible! But her eyes tell her I live now."

"Yes." Her eyes see; but her mind does not believe them. You know I am by education a physician."

"I do."

"Let me be your doctor and hers for to-night."

"Will you?" says Anstruther. Then he gives Barnes' hand a warm grasp, and mutters, "Give my wife's mind back to her, and to me, and I am grateful for ever," and there are tears in the eyes of this great strong fellow.

"Will you do as I say implicitly?"

"Of course," answers Edwin, who has learnt discipline in the navy.

"Very well, I'll try," replies Barnes. "Go to your wife and attempt to take her in your arms again, but don't force her against her will. I want to see her face and hear what she has to say to you."

While he has been speaking he has noticed that Marina has thrown off Enid, who has been trying to persuade her that Edwin is alive, and has gone partly over to the curtains as if anxious to draw them aside, and, then, apparently not daring to look at what is behind, has retreated, shuddering.

Anstruther, as directed, approaches his bride again, calling her softly by name, and would soothe and embrace her. As before, she draws away, but this time gives him a loving look and says, "When I am as dead as you are, dear—we'll love again," then screams at him, "No, no, not now. You are his spirit—your body is behind those curtains!"

As she says this, Edwin, who has got close to her, for the first time seeing the dark red marks of Tomasso's clutch upon her round white throat, suddenly cries in a hoarse awful voice, "Some devil has tried to murder the woman I love, and killed—Oh, Heaven!—only her reason," and with that bursts into tearful imprecations.

And she screams back to him, "Ay. He put those marks on my neck. Curse him who killed you!"

Barnes interrupts the cruel scene by seizing Anstruther, pulling him aside and whispering sternly, "Is this your promised obedience? If you are not calm, will she be?"

He signs to Enid to again soothe Marina who is now dementedly muttering to herself.

Gazing at her, Anstruther replies, "Calm? What have I to look for upon this earth but revenge? Who is the villain who has destroyed her reason? Do you know?"

"Never mind him now," says Barnes, sharply. "First get your wife's senses back to her, for every minute she is in her present state is against her ever leaving it. Of course, time may cure anything; but, as a medical man, I tell you that if your wife's delusion is not destroyed to-night, it never will be. Acting on that theory, I am ready to take a desperate chance. If it fails, I fear the worst. Have I your consent to try it?"

"What is it?" asks Edwin, trembling; for this change from the greatest happiness to the greatest sorrow of his life, has for the moment shattered his nerves.

"Before you came, your wife was sane, though broken-hearted; she thought you

had been murdered. Since she has seen you, she thinks you are a spirit; she says your body is behind those curtains."

"Well!"

"Well, show her the body that is behind those curtains."

"You believe there is a body behind them?"

"I hope there is!"

"You *hope* there is?" echoes Anstruther, surprised and horrified.

"Yes, for your wife's sanity and your happiness!" returns Barnes. "For if, when I open that drapery, there is no corpse behind, Marina will be a mad woman—in fact, is one now; such an hallucination without reason is mania. At present I believe she has so vivid an impression that you are a dead man, that even your presence has not as yet overcome it. Pray God there is a body, that she may see it is not yours."

"Then you think there is some one killed there?" says Edwin, looking at the dark draperies.

"I do!" is Barnes' confident reply.

"Who?"

"That I don't know, but I've an idea that Providence has worked out things about right this time!" answers the American.

"Have I your consent? Mind, the chance is desperate!"

"Yes!" says Anstruther firmly. "For God's sake and in God's name, go on!"

"Then be ready; when I tell you, do you draw these curtains;" and with these words to Edwin, Mr. Barnes turns to Marina, who is standing with Enid's arms about her, gazing at her husband in a dazed way.

The two girls are near the centre of the room, the men between them and the draped door. Anstruther approaches this slowly, while Mr. Barnes, considering his words carefully, says to the bride, "Mrs. Anstruther, you think your husband's body is behind those curtains?"

"I know it!" she cries; "I heard his coming footsteps—I saw twice through that canopy the knife strike deep into the heart I love. I heard his awful groans. I saw the draperies twist about his falling form. Would I not think *that* was my husband if I did not know he was dead!" With this she points to Edwin, who is approaching the curtains, and whispers to him, "You are treading in your own blood now."

Barnes looks, sees there is a red pool round the Englishman's feet, and being pretty certain of his point, says quickly, "So far you are right—you heard a step, but it was not your husband's. You saw a form behind those curtains, but it was not the man you loved; the groans that came to you were not Edwin's—the body lying there is not Gerard Anstruther's but——!"

He gives the signal, and Edwin drawing the curtains open, Marina, who even while he speaks has been gasping—and panting, "Can it be? "Is this so?" springs forward and screams with joy, "My husband is alive! Thank Heaven! That is the body of the man who came to see me kill him!"

For there behind the curtains, glaring at them with face half grin and half agony and two great wounds in his heart, lies Count Musso Danella.

"Danella!' gasps Enid, sick with horror.

"My friend," mutters Edwin sadly, and stoops to lift up his body.

But Barnes closing the curtains and shutting out a sight that makes them shudder, stops him, remarking, "No use, the scoundrel's been dead ten minutes. What I guessed: Providence was about right. Your enemy got what he intended for you."

"My enemy? Impossible! Don't defame his memory! He gave Marina to me!"

"Ask her, and see how much you have to thank him for that," says Barnes drily.

But Edwin going to Marina to take her in his arms, exclaims, "See, she is weeping for him now."

"For him? For that villain? No!" cries the girl, who now having regained her senses, remembers the awful gulf that stands between her and the man she loves and in whose face supernatural terror is replaced by despairing sadness, "It is because I have lost you, my husband, on this my bridal night. Oh! Edwin"—she gives Barnes a heart-breaking glance—"you had better have left me as I was. I should have been happier insane!"

"My darling, this is as great a madness as the other," says Edwin, trying to get her in his arms, for Marina now appears quite faint. "Lost me? You have gained me for ever. You are my wife—my loved wife!"

But she fights him off with unnatural strength, and cries in a voice that horrifies them all, "I am your wife, but you are the murderer of my brother! Our lips never meet again!"

CHAPTER XXV

DOCTOR BARNES.

THIS speech astonishes and dismays Edwin more than either Barnes or Enid; they have, in a measure, expected it; to him it is lightning in a clear sky.

For a moment it staggers and unmans him. He turns to the American and mutters in a broken voice, "You cured my darling of one delusion: cure her of this more cruel madness, and save me from despair."

"I killed an *insane* hallucination by a shock," replies Barnes. "You go to her and kill a *sane* one by reason!"

"*Sane?* To think me the murderer of her brother?"

"Yes, with the proofs I imagine Danella has given her, perfectly sane."

"Proofs? Absurd!"

"Question her and see. But as you love her, remember how she has suffered to-night, thinking she saw you murdered before her eyes. See, how weak she is!"—Barnes points to Marina, who, partly supported by Enid's arms, stands clutching a chair to keep upon her feet, as she devours Edwin with eyes full of love and hopelessness, and concludes, "Whatever she says or does to you, be gentle with her, and never doubt that she loves you."

Thus admonished, Anstruther comes towards his bride; but when within a few feet of her, she puts out an arm to stop him, and says, commandingly, "No nearer! You can talk to me from there!" then implores in a wild, pathetic way, "For Heaven's sake don't tempt me again. Your kisses would drive me mad with shame; in them I would forget you were the assassin of Antonio!"

"You say I murdered your brother," answers Edwin, forcing himself to be calm. "May I ask how I killed him?"

"In a duel! You did not know that he would die. You thought he was only wounded. You hurried away to catch the *Vulture*, leaving for Egypt."

"Ah! that duel at Ajaccio!" cries Edwin, a curious light coming into his eyes.

"Ah, Heaven!—You remember!—You acknowledge! Now bid me farewell for ever!" Marina says this in a voice of despair, and murmurs, "I love you better than my soul, but am as much your widow as if you were dead like him who lies behind those curtains. In mercy, let me go from you!"

For Edwin has got hold of her hand, crying, "You bid me farewell no more. Thank Heaven, *I'm not the man!*"

"*Not the man?*" Marina cries back. "Not the man? God knows that villain gave me proofs enough for me to take the knife in my hand to slay you."

"To kill me, your husband?" gasps Anstruther in a tone of horror, releasing her. And from this time on Mr. Barnes notices with dismay that he makes no further efforts to approach his bride.

Unheeding Edwin's action, Marina ejaculates, "Look!" and in an instant this creature who has been scarce able to stand, flies like a meteor to the table and seizes the things Danella has shown to her—excitement for a few brief moments giving her preternatural strength. She darts with them to Edwin, and utters hysterically, "My brother's bullet flattened against the coin that saved your life! Your name upon the pistol that killed him. Deny that. See the description of the duel, given when you feared you were about to die, to exonerate your second, written in your handwriting. Why, it's certainty. Tell the truth. In mercy don't deceive me."

"Those pistols are mine," answers Anstruther, moodily, as if some other thought were dominating this matter of the duel in his mind. "They were taken from my state-room that morning at Ajaccio, by the officer who killed your brother. This coin was his; this statement made just previous to his death, in my hand, because he was too weak to write himself, is that of George Fellows Arthur, who was wounded on the *Sealark* when he bombarded Alexandria. He died in my arms a few hours afterwards, and these little things, the flattened bullet, the silver crown, and all that is or was in that valise there, which bears his initials 'G. A.,' George Arthur, were what he asked me, at the last, to deliver with

his dying words to his mother when I returned to England. And on this evidence you believed——"

"Others believed also!" screams Marina. "Don't reproach me! That man telegraphed to your sister to stop our marriage. You, who saw the duel, tell me it was not my husband killed my brother."

She turns imploringly to Barnes, and he answers, "Thank God, no! I was in error also. Anstruther, I thought as she did, and would have prevented your marriage, but Danella intercepted my dispatch."

Marina, her face aglow with rapture, dashes to the floor the evidences of this night's monstrous lie, and cries, "With these he thought to make me kill you, Edwin!—At last, again I'm happy!" and is staggering to her husband's arms, when he horrifies them all by saying coldly, "A pity, Barnes, your dispatch came too late!" At these words his bride recoils, shudders, shrinks away from him, and cries out hysterically, "Oh! I knew this would be the end. If he were guilty I could not be his wife! If he were innocent he would never forgive me. He's going to break my heart! See, he looks as he did when he condemned the criminal in Egypt."

"Edwin, my brother! Remember how you love her!" begs Enid.

"Anstruther!" says Barnes, sternly, coming to him—"your wife can bear no more agony to-night."

"My wife, who on evidence such as this thought her husband an assassin! That's what you called me!" answers Edwin in a very stern tone, confronting Marina, who looks at him with a pale, scared face, but does not for the moment answer.

"Do you suppose I would have believed you a murderess on the word of others? But dare I doubt your words to me that to-night you took a dagger in your hand to kill me—your husband hurrying to your arms, with all the affection, love and trust man ever gave to woman? Tell me I didn't hear you! Tell me you lied to me! Tell me you are delirious—but don't, in mercy to me, let me think that my bride would to-night have assassinated me!" Edwin begins with a reproach but ends with a supplication. Getting no denial he turns gloomily away, sinks into a chair, covers his face with his hands, and looks at her no more.

"I was crazy then—as I shall be soon again," gasps Marina, giving him a yearning glance that would melt him if he saw it.

Guessing, he dare not look at her for fear he will forgive; the girl becomes braver, and, taking resolution to fight for her happiness, walks up to him, a slight tremble in her step, puts out a hand to lay it upon his arm, then withdraws it, shuddering, lest he repulse her; and says in a voice unnaturally calm—"Edwin, my husband, you listened to the criminal in Egypt—do the same to your wife!"

"So, you want justice!" Anstruther says coldly, not looking at her.

"Not justice, but, for God's sake, mercy!" she cries, imploringly.

"Go on," he says, hoarsely. "Do you suppose I want to break my heart also? You know how I love you—tell me all!"

"All—all now, Gerard! It is my little chance of keeping my husband's love.—I had always intended to confide it to you; some day in the far happy future, that may now never be mine, when years of fellowship and walking hand in hand had made you know that your wife had repented—but now—perhaps you'll not forgive.—You may think me unworthy to be your wife. Oh, God turn your spirit to mercy! Pity me, Gerard; think how I love you—don't break my heart!" and, as she says this, the girl begins to falter and tremble and shudder in a paroxysm of despairing agony.

Enid, coming to Barnes, whispers to him, "For Heaven's sake stop this; it is too cruel!"

"Not I!" he returns, grimly; "it's their one chance of happiness. If your brother does not forgive her to-night, he never will." And then he says impressively to Marina, "Tell your husband all."

"All? about my vow?—and the hospital?" she gasps. "That when he thought me an angel of mercy, I was an angel of death!"

"Angel of death?" cries Anstruther, with a tender ring in his voice. "In the hospital? No, no! There you were a saint on earth. Not from your own lips would I believe that the dear one who nursed me so mercifully, so divinely, with such infinite pity, and such womanly devotion, could be aught but an angel of light. In the hospital! That was where I learnt to love you!" and he gives his bride a glance that tells her that even now his heart is all hers.

This look, instead of encouraging, frightens Marina, for it shows to her the greatness of the man's affection that to-night's confession may lose her. She cries

wildly, "You think me an angel. Ah, Heaven! when you know, you'll think me a fiend! I can't tell, I dare not tell you all. Then you will never forgive!"

"Is it so horrible as that?" groans Edwin, and Barnes can see the strong man's fingers clench themselves in agony.

"You'll think it so. You are English; I am a Corsican. You've not grown up in a land where undying vengeance is its noblest passion, where the honoured custom of the *vendetta* is in the air you breathe. Think of that, and pardon me. I loved my brother almost as I love you. I thought the duel unfair—Antonio murdered. A true daughter of Corsica, over my brother's body I made the vow of the *vendetta* on his assassin. That vow took me to Egypt. That vow took me into the hospital where wounded English sailors lay, that in their delirium I might discover my victim."

At this declaration Enid shrinks from her, and Anstruther, who has gazed at her in amazed horror, breaks into a ghastly laugh, and cries, "This was the nun's vow of charity, for which I honoured the girl I loved. Don't cast infamy on the being I worshipped. Don't tell me that the woman I had taken to be the wife of my affection would have slain in cold blood a wounded man!" He seizes her, turns her beautiful face towards him, looks wildly into her despairing eyes, and then mutters, "By all the saints, I won't believe you, if you do!"

"No, no! I entered the hospital only to discover, not to kill—I couldn't have done that!" screams Marina. "Ask the dying men whose last pangs I made easy; ask those I nursed to life, and see if I was not better than my vow! I sought my enemy; but I pitied, I tended, I soothed the rest—they loved me! Never did fevered sufferer call for water and I came not. Never did man die of pestilence and I flee from him. You were one of them, my husband, you know! How say you—were the hands that hovered over your couch in Egypt the—hands of hate or the hands of love?"

"The hands of an angel—all mercy, all charity!" answers Edwin, with tears in his eyes and in his voice. "As I hear you speak of deliberate murder, I cry, am I mad or are you?"

"But I had repented of that. For love of you I had renounced my vow, until that devil," Marina bursts forth, pointing to the curtains behind which is Danella's body, "brought me here, back to the habits and traditions of my native land, to be the jeer and scoff of my neighbours because I forgave—to bow my head in shame on this, my bridal day, at taunts from childhood's friends because I did not slay. Then to-night, when association had made me again a Corsican and a savage, Danella and Tomasso proved to me that you, my husband, had killed the brother that I loved. They forced a dagger into my hand, and for a few moments I was mad! That's all. Forgive me—I was mad!"

As Marina stops, panting with weakness and misery, and gazing at them with eyes pleading for sympathy, the other three look at each other, an awful thought in each of their minds that none of their tongues dare utter.

Anstruther falters a moment, then desperately strides up to his bride in a frightened way, and, pointing to the curtains that screen Danella's corpse, gasps, with lips that are pale and trembling, "Who killed him?"

As he asked this, Marina starts as if he had struck her, and gasps in return, "Not I! Before God, not I! It was Tomasso!"

But as her husband utters, "Thank Heaven!" with a great sigh of relief she is before him, with eyes flashing unutterable reproach, crying, "Look me in the face, if you dare, after that question. I—your wife, your bride—you feared had waited in ambush to slay you, and had mistaken Danella for you. That's what my husband thinks of me. When I heard the coming step I remembered, not my vow of the *vendetta*, but my vow to be your wife. The dagger Tomasso had placed in my hands, I turned against him. Behold the bruises of his clutch upon my throat when I was fighting for your life! Look on them! They cry shame on you!" As she says this last, scorn mingles with the soft reproof of her voice.

The livid marks of Tomasso's cruel hand smite Edwin with remorse, and make him very tender to this girl, who in her helplessness has fought for him. He sobs forth, "For me! For me! Forgive!"

But she heeds him not, going on wildly, "And you thought I would have murdered you? I plead no more. I'm too weak to plead. When you were feeble I succoured you; when you were attacked I defended you; and now, in my extremity, after the agony of this night—the heart that should beat against mine is turned from me—my bridegroom has deserted me. I love you,

Edwin. That's all—cruel as you are I love you—I—forgive you."

And beaming ineffable charity and divine tenderness on this man who has made her suffer, Marina staggers, and would fall, but Anstruther's arms close round her. Lying upon his heart she gives him one happy smile and one little sigh, "My husband!" and becomes unconscious as death.

As for him, he is like a wild man, showering kisses upon lips that do not return them, begging forgiveness for his cruelty, and mumbling caresses into ears that do not hear him. Seeing he cannot animate her, he calls to Barnes, "Quick! Tell me she's not dead. Have I broken the tenderest heart on earth?"

Before the American can answer, Enid is by her brother's side, and, woman like, gives him two awful stabs, for she says, in a cutting voice, "That's right. Cry shame on yourself after your cruelty has made your bride faint. That's the way men always do. Your caresses would have done the woman who loves you more good when she begged you for them. Let me have the dear one in my arms, and see if my kindness cannot undo my brother's severity."

But Edwin says grimly, "She stays here."

And Barnes rejoins, "Which is exactly the place that is best for her."

At this, Miss Anstruther turns her eyes upon him, and giving him a little scornful laugh, cries, "You're a fine doctor! You let my brother torture your patient to death!"

But Barnes, who has been bending over Marina, says hopefully, "Pooh! happiness rarely kills. She felt your arms, Edwin, about her before she fainted. Her last sigh was one of contentment, not of despair. That's a great point. Now, before your wife regains consciousness, I have a few words to say to you. I let this thing go on, because I knew that this explanation must come before either you or your bride could be happy. As your physician, I should have stopped it at once; as your friend, I permitted it to continue. This over, I'm your doctor again."

"Then, as my doctor, bring her to," whispers Edwin.

"Not at present."

"Not at present!" echoes Enid, surprised.

"That's what I said," returns Barnes. "When your wife, Anstruther, opens her eyes, it must not be upon this room nor in this house. She's endured more agony to-night than most people suffer during life. She has youth, health, strength, and I trust in you that she'll have happiness with which to fight her battle against any evil results to her nervous system from the shock it has just received."

"She'll have all the happiness my love and my tenderness can give her," says Edwin.

"That'll be plenty," continues Barnes, gravely. "But mark me" (here his voice takes a tone of command), "don't you, on any consideration, leave your wife's side until you have my permission. Not seeing you, the memory of this will come back to her; she'll grow anxious at your absence, and perhaps hear those coming footsteps again. Your continual presence must keep her from that. Take her to Enid's room. When your bride awakes, your arms are what she must feel, and your face is what she must see, and be ready in fifteen minutes to leave this house."

At this Edwin, who is in the act of carrying Marina from the room, pauses and says, "Leave this house? Where shall we go to?"

"To Ajaccio, en route for England."

"Marina is too weak to travel."

"She must travel! I must have your wife out of Corsica to-morrow morning—away from all that will remind her of the *vendetta*. Any excitement is better for her than remembrance. Leave everything to me. If I'm your doctor, obey me." And Barnes comes to Marina and looks at her with a grave face.

"Do what you like, only save her for me, that's all. Save her for me!" gasps Anstruther, gazing at the beautiful creature lying in his arms.

"All right—I'll make every arrangement. There'll be a carriage for you shortly at the door. You think of nothing but making your wife know that you're alive and love her—Enid and I will do the rest, won't we, little girl?" says Barnes, very tenderly, to his sweetheart, as he looks at Edwin bearing his bride out of the apartment, and thinks, "What would be my despair if my love was in such strait as his?"

Something in his face alarms Enid; she comes to him, places her hand upon his arm, and whispers, "You fear?"

"No," he replies, consideringly. "I have great hopes she'll be able to dodge the brain fever. But not a word of that to your brother."

Here his sweetheart astonishes him by giving him a look of admiration and remarking, "What a doctor you are! What an officer you would make! You give your commands as if you were in action!"

"Yes, a sick-room is the doctor's quarter-deck," says Barnes. "But to business." And he gives Enid some hasty directions about the articles she had best take with her for Marina's use and hers. As for their baggage it can follow after—he'll send his servant for it. The great thing is to get his patient out of Corsica and away from the associations and recollections of this night. "If I could but keep Marina asleep until then, it would be a great thing for her. What would I not give for a narcotic?" As he says this, the sound of horses' hoofs upon the avenue in front of the house comes to him, and he hears the clanking of a sabre and a martial tread upon the portico. "De Belloc!" he cries. "I'll see what he can do for me," and steps out to meet that officer.

As Miss Anstruther goes off to do the commission he has charged her with, she sees the American in eager conversation with a military figure on the balcony.

Mr. Barnes hastily explains the situation to de Belloc, and that officer, who is promptness itself in all matters of duty, issues orders to a few of his men to follow up and arrest Tomasso. "After committing an assassination, a Corsican generally flies to the mountains and becomes a bandit," he remarks, grimly. "We'll capture this gentleman before he develops into a full-fledged Fra Diavolo."

By this time the members of the Count's household are aroused. They hear of their master's fate with horror mingled with rage; and, were it not for de Belloc's troopers, there might be another tragedy that night; for Danella had been a kind master to his servants, who mutter some very ugly threats against these foreigners as they look upon the dead body of their lord.

But Barnes does not give them much time to think or plot; some he sets to work carrying out the luggage that must go with them; the rest he drives off to the stables to put horses to a carriage, which, assisted by a couple of cavalry men handy with strap and buckle, they soon make ready for the party.

Meantime, learning from a servant that the priest in the village acts as a general practitioner for the peasants about, and has a simple stock of medicines, the American rides off on one of de Belloc's horses, and waking the good old man from his slumbers, tells him what has befallen the bride he blessed in his little chapel that day, and obtains from him the narcotic he desires. Returning, he places this in Enid's hands with these words: "When Marina comes to her senses, if she seems happy and confident that her husband is with her and alive, give her this, in one dose; if not, stop the carriage till I overtake you."

"But you come with us?" says Enid.

"Yes, just behind you on horseback with de Belloc."

"You've had no rest for days; you'll kill yourself. For my sake take a seat in our carriage," entreats his sweetheart.

"There's no room. Your brother and his wife, you and your maid will fill it."

"Leave Thompson behind. Do you suppose I am helpless without her?"

"Not at all; but alone with these Corsicans after what has happened, your maid, who is a green English girl, would die of fright," returns Barnes.

"Burton, you think of everybody except yourself!" cries Enid, and gives him a look that makes him very happy.

A minute or two afterwards Anstruther carries his bride, still insensible, to the carriage. After seeing his patient is as comfortable as possible for the journey, and tucking an extra rug about his sweetheart, Barnes gives the signal to the driver, and away they go; Edwin, with Marina in his arms, on the back seat, and Enid and her maid sitting opposite to them.

De Belloc and those of his troopers who are not in pursuit of Tomasso follow after, and the whole party travel down the valley of the Gravona, whose white torrent, weirdly beautiful in the moonlight, foams beside their path, racing with them to the sea.

The French officer glances sharply once or twice at the American who rides by his side, and then says, "How long is it since you slept?"

"About forty-eight hours!" replies Barnes. "Give me a weed, if you have any with you, de Belloc; I've smoked my last, and I think one will help keep me in the saddle."

"*Diable!* you do a great deal for a friend," returns the Frenchman, producing his cigar-case; "but you are in love, I presume, with that beautiful English girl. May I congratulate you?"

"You can," says Barnes, helping him-

self to an Habana. "Married in a month."

"Ah!" mutters the veteran, a little sadly, "I loved once," and his grizzled moustache twitches nervously for a moment. They smoke in silence, till suddenly de Belloc reins in his horse and says "Hush!"

The two pause, listen, and hear a few scattered shots ring out far up the mountain-side.

Half an hour afterwards, the detachment sent in pursuit of Tomasso overtake them at a gallop.

De Belloc says sharply to the sergeant in command of the party, "Where is your prisoner?"

"We left him behind us," replies the man, saluting.

"Dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"My orders were to capture him alive, if possible," returns his officer, sternly.

"He would not surrender. He fired on us, and wounded one of the men."

"Then it could not be avoided. You can fall in, sergeant," and, turning to Barnes, de Belloc continues, "This will make it easy for your party to leave Corsica. There will be no trial, and do you contrive to get out of the island before I make my report to the civil authorities. Then all will be well."

"Providence permitting, we are out of Ajaccio this morning," replies Barnes, for it is now after midnight. A moment later he says to his friend, "Please direct your men not to talk of Tomasso's death in hearing of my party. They've had shocks enough for one episode."

"Certainly," is the reply, and the necessary orders are given.

Just about this time, Edwin, holding Marina in his arms in the carriage, leans over to his sister and whispers, "She is conscious."

And, as he says this, his bride murmurs, "My husband's voice! You are alive! My dream is true!" A moment after, she looks round and asks faintly, "Where are we? Where do we go?"

Anstruther, who has been silently fondling her, answers, "With me, dear one, to England."

"Away from here—in my husband's arms—I'm happy," she returns, and after a little goes to sleep, for Enid has obeyed Barnes' instructions, and has given her the narcotic.

But, before this brings her rest, Edwin sheds another tear over his beloved one; for he feels her hand go to his heart, and he hears her murmur, "It beats—my husband lives!"

She is sleeping peacefully as a child upon his breast, as in the morning sunlight they drive up the quiet main street of Ajaccio.

It is a bright, beautiful, cloudless Mediterranean day. Barnes, riding behind the carriage, gazes in a sleepy way down the gulf, and sees the steamer from Marseilles just entering the harbour. In a moment he is thoroughly awake, and a few minutes after is at the office of the steamship company, and in direct telegraphic communication over the Toulon cable with their main house in Marseilles.

So it comes to pass that the boat has hardly arrived when the American goes on board, and astonishes her captain by showing him a dispatch from the head of his company, directing him to discharge his freight and passengers at once, and return immediately to Marseilles with Mr. Barnes and party.

"The manager is mad!" cries the skipper. "I have other ports to go to!"

"Not this trip!" is the confident rejoinder. "The lady with us is too sick to wait."

"Why, it can't be philanthropy has caused this crazy order," says the captain, rubbing his hands in a dazed way. "What can have made them do it?"

"The power of American gold!" laughs Mr. Barnes; for his patient is doing well, and though very tired, he is very happy.

The commander of the steamship goes up to the office, verifies his dispatch, and two hours afterwards his vessel steams out of Ajaccio with Marina, Edwin, Enid and Mr. Barnes on board.

Anstruther has carried his wife, still sleeping, to a state-room. The American is looking over the taffrail at the inn of *Il Pescatore*, which is now growing indistinct in the distance, and thinking of all the misery and trouble the duel fought upon the beach there has produced, when Enid comes to his side and he says to her, "Now that Corsica is behind us, the sooner Mrs. Anstruther awakes and pulls herself together the better."

"I came to tell you that Marina has opened her eyes and is now talking to her husband," answers Enid.

"Got any delusions? Does she say anything about coming footsteps?" asks

Barnes anxiously, tossing away a cigarette he is about placing in his mouth.

"No."

"Thank Heaven!"

"Only her eyes never leave Edwin. The way they follow him about is pathetic—it made me cry. Just as I left, she said to me, 'Think if I had lost him, my innocent one they tried to make me murder!'"

"All right," cries Barnes; "that's sanity. I'm going to bed."

"I thought you would wish to see your patient," says Enid, slightly astonished at his off-hand manner.

"No, the sight of me at present would set her memory going, and just now I want her to forget. She'll be well in a few days. Oh! how sleepy I am," replies Barnes, stifling an enormous yarn.

"Then you're not going to prescribe anything for Marina?"

"Oh, of course. I wouldn't be much of a doctor if I didn't send her a prescription," replies the gentleman. With these words he goes off quickly and a few moments after returning, says, "If I'm the physician, you must be the nurse; go down and see that the patient takes the medicine I've ordered for her."

"What's that?"

"A good big breakfast," rejoins Barnes. "Come and report to me if she eats it."

Half an hour after Miss Anstruther returns to him once more, gives a little laugh and says, "Doctor, your invalid was wonderfully hungry. Your diagnosis was that of a genius."

The only answer she gets to this is a resounding snore; and looking down, she discovers that Barnes, who is lying upon a bench, is fast asleep.

The girl gazes at him, smiles and mutters, "What a darling scarecrow!" For not having changed his clothes since he left Nice, with face unshorn, matted hair and mouth wide open, in this sleep of utter exhaustion, he makes a frightful picture. But as she looks upon and sees the deep lines of care, the wrinkles and haggard expression that these three last days have brought to the face she loves, Enid murmurs, "His fatigue, his care, his anxiety, all for me."

And although last night's travel has wearied her, she sits down by him, and making a soft pillow of her lap for his head, silently watches his slumbers.

After a time his sleep becomes restless and troubled, he struggles, his lips move, she can hear him calling to the sailors on board the felucca, and knows he dreams he's fighting his way to her side, and she grows very tender towards him. At last he cries, in a groan of despair, "Oh, God! for a little breeze to carry me to Corsica in time to save my love!" As he does this, the tears in the girl's eyes overflow and run down her fair cheeks. She bows her head over him, and whispers sweet words in his ear; and then, as he keeps on his groaning and mumbling, she begins to shudder with terror; her face becomes white. With a throb of fear she pounces upon Mr. Barnes and wakes him up.

That gentleman comes to his senses, looks round and says very gravely, "Enid, what are you crying for? Anything wrong below?"

"No!" replies his sweetheart with a sigh of relief—"I!—I! oh! Burton, you were making such a noise in your sleep that I thought that the brain fever you apprehended for Marina had come to you; and so I woke you up and robbed you of your rest."

"I've had plenty for the present—I must have slept six hours; it's nearly dark now," says the gentleman, looking about. And then getting Enid's hand, remarks, "So you were frightened for me?"

"Frightened? As if I could bear to have anything happen to you now!

"Have I grown in value?"

"Enormously. What would have become of us all without you last night? A doctor that has common sense!"

"A doctor without diploma or practice."

"Oh! you've got one patient now. Edwin said this morning that he would hand me over to you as his fee for your medical services."

"Indeed!" cries Barnes; "I wonder if he would pay me my fee down!"

"Down? What do you mean?"

"I mean," replies the gentleman slowly, "that a month is a very long time."

"Oh, if that's what you're insinuating, and you dare, I'll—I'll marry you as soon as we arrive in England," says Enid, blushing a little.

"Done!" cries Barnes, "May Heaven punish me if I ever make you repent it."

As they sit together hand in hand, looking at the blue cloud that in the dusk is all that is now left to them of Corsica, Edwin brings Marina on deck. She is very pale, but beautiful as ever; and, though her great eyes follow her husband every

time he moves, there is naught but happiness and contentment in them. Anstruther strides up to Barnes, and seizing his hand gives it a mighty shake, and, looking at his wife, says huskily, "God bless you—I believe but for you my bride would have lost her senses last night."

"Don't mention it," returns Barnes; "I shall receive the biggest fee that ever doctor got, and am content."

Edwin looks at him in astonishment until Enid says, "My brother, in three days I am to be the happiest girl in the world!"

"What a curious synonym for Mrs. Barnes of New York!" laughs the American.

THE END.

Stirling, May 1888.

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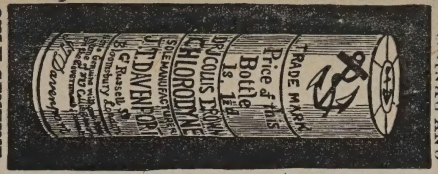

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